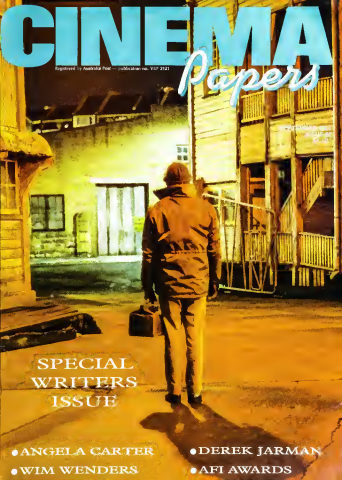


# CINEMA

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## Papers



### SPECIAL WRITERS ISSUE

• ANGELA CARTER  
• WIM WENDERS

• DEREK JARMAN  
• AFI AWARDS

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# CINEMA *Papers*

No 65

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THE WHITE STUFF:  
Dapkins compares his  
standards to the built

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# A REPLY TO ANDREW WRIGHT AND GRAHAM SHIRLEY

Graham Shirley and Andrew Wright, in their attack on the accuracy and validity of my research findings (*Cinema Papers*, July), seem to be working from indirect reports rather than from anything I have written myself. In particular they don't seem to have consulted my article 'Copyright issues for Australian films and film', which is where I listed the results of my inquiries into the copyright application files held by the Australian Archives. This article was published in *Archives and Manuscripts* in November 1985.

There were a number of media reports, of varying accuracy, about my discovery, but it is regrettable that Andrew and Graham have as a result rushed one-price half-informed as to what the research was and what it uncovered.

The *Repossession of Copyright Proprietary and the correspondence associated with applications for copyright* have been used by many scholars over the years. But when I arrived in Canberra early in 1986, one important part of the collection on copyright — the many-volume index to the Commonwealth film (1900-1968) had disappeared. I suspect that it could have been 'readily available' to Andrew Wright in 1983, however two successive Federal Office Librarians, working in the request of several researchers, had tried in vain to find the index during the first half of 1985. I relinquished the lost index, and it has now been moved from Wilson and placed with the entire copyright material in the Australian Archives. The simplest claim that it was never lost is wrong.

The assertion that in my other discovery I was only covering ground Andrew had covered three years earlier is also wrong. My research was based on the fact that there proved to be not one but two parallel series of copyright files (plus a third series of unnumbered items). Previous searches for plays and screenplays only found the application forms in the first of these series, (A11361) together with occasional playscripts or screenplays which were included in the same envelopes. As I openly acknowledged in my *Archives and Manuscripts* article

none of [the film scripts] in the A11361 series have been accessed and consulted by other researchers. (p148)

However the Archives staff can confirm that I was the first person to systematically and thoroughly search a major portion of the collection, and to locate hundreds of scripts of performed Australian stage plays — some of which were the basis of later films, and a smaller number of unproduced filmscripts. As these were too bulky to keep in the same envelope as the application forms, they were held in the 'binder' A11362 series. They could not have been previously upland, for the simple reason that they had never been officially cleared (notified) by the Archives staff.

Richard Featheringham

*Richard Featheringham is mistaken in his belief that the purpose of our article, 'Reply to the Archivist', was to discredit his finding of a series of plays and screenplays held by the Australian Archives Office. Our intent continues to be not so much in the location of such missing material, but in the use to which it is put. In replying to the initial Featheringham and Cusack articles we desired to set the record straight for posterity by the provision of new material in contrast with their misrepresentation of Australian cinema history.*

Graham Shirley and Andrew Wright

## FASSBINDER COMPETITION

*Cinema Papers* has five copies of the Fassbinder biography by Robert Rait and Peter Berking to give away, courtesy of Australian Publishing Company. For a review p56. All answers are simple questions: name Fassbinder's last three films, send the answer to *Cinema Papers*, 42 Charles Street, Abbotsford, Victoria 3067. Mark your envelope, 'Fassbinder Competition'.



■ The *Shane Gould* column on Australian films has been told over until the next issue.

■ The Australian Film Commission has approved an investment of \$100,000 in five joint ventures with Australian film and television production companies, under a new AFC script and program. The five companies are: Screen Films Limited (TWA), Screen

Film Productions (PFL), Simpson Le Monnier Films (VFL), Sandstone, Coors and Carrall (SCCA), and Teli Interim Productions (NSP). The AFC's investment will be matched dollar for dollar by each company.

■ In the review of *The Screenings of Australia* in the July issue Ross Lumsdell's byline was omitted.

### Dear Mr. Berking,

In an otherwise fine article about the making of *Mighty Tish* there was an unfortunate implication that Judy Davis took the script away and rewrote her character. This is incorrect. Laura Jones was the sole writer of the *Mighty Tish* screenplay.

The producers, Brenda Levy, Emma and I encouraged and were delighted to have Judy's involvement during the final drafting of *Mighty Tish*. She attended a couple of script sessions and was involved in some wonderful improvisations of a number of scenes during the course of rehearsal. Many valuable ideas from these sessions were fed as our discussions back into the script.

I always like to encourage an atmosphere of creative collaboration during a production but I am a great supporter of the writer's role. I leave the rewriting to the writer.

Yours sincerely,  
Gillian Armstrong

*(NOTE: The article in question was a complete and accurate transcript of an interview with Gillian Armstrong.)*



DALLAS Three sides of the studio

## DENIS DOES DALLAS

Film per Fure, Texas, on the map, Denis Thompson hopes this is not the same for Dallas, Texas. He is chairman of Australian Film Studios Ltd., owners of the Paramount and Mann Ray studios, and the company behind a new studio complex in the Melbourne suburb of Dallas.

The complex, on the site of a former milk bottling plant, will have eight studios, workshops and production and administrative offices. Space will be available for hire, from the whole studio to a few offices for pre-production. Fifty smaller premises will complement the studio and provide on-hand expertise during production. The businesses will include a plaster moulder, metalworker, electrician, air conditioner and caterer.

Studio facilities will include a deep water tank, a water floor studio with roustabout equipment and an animation studio.



■ The Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission is offering awards to media which promote understanding and public discussion of human rights issues in Australia. Six media and two film awards will be made, with a value of \$300 each. For more information contact the commission at level 24, Australian Express Building, 388 George Street, Sydney. The closing date for nominations is 16 October 1987.

■ Film treatment under IIBA, increased by 15 per cent in 1986-87 from the previous year. Feature film financing declined by 20 per cent, down from \$16.4 million in 1979-80, with 26 films secured. Documentary financing stood divided, from \$11.6 million in 1983-84 to \$19.9 million in 1986-87. Approximately 50 per cent of the drama projects were fully or partially underwritten prior to the release of the IIBA treatment.

■ The Australian National Documentary Conference will take place in Adelaide from 15 to 18 October. For more information, contact the conference organizers, via the South Australian Film Corporation, 113 Taggart's Hill Road, Mawson, South Australia 5034.

## THE PRIZEWINNERS

— TRIVIA QUIZ, July 1987 issue p35

First prize (\$250 worth of CEL's Classics Collection videos): Richard Carr, Burners up (The African Queen and South Pacific, courtesy CBS Film), Brenda Watson, Cleopatra, Leslie Campbell, D Lewis and Chris Mead.

### THE ANSWERS

1. Brett (Gomer), Bart (Kelly), Dave (Moore) and Kent (Goffin).
2. Gordon Clatter in the Movie Strangers Show.
3. Roy Rogers and Dale Gribble. It was Trigger he had stuffed, not Dale.
4. Ram.
5. Pines.
6. Green because he had Volcanian blood. Something he got from his dad.
7. A duck ... well a puppet that looked like a duck.
8. Free credit.
9. 112 Maple Drive.
10. PAB 1.
11. Ralph Krunden in The Anonymous.
12. Linda.
13. To protect the innocent.
14. A headscarf. She used it to mock crutches.
15. Nose twitching.
16. Self-protection.
17. The store room in the Daily Planet building. Less frequently he used to

- disappear down a back alley. Never in a phone booth.
18. Arnold Feather.
  19. Robert Taylor's *Deliverance* and *Mad Squad*. The actor was Tye Andrews.
  20. Jim Anderson from *Father Knows Best* sold insurance. He wonder he was such a bum.
  21. Because his "uncle" came from Mars in *My Favorite Martian*.
  22. 2 Victor 1 and 2 Victor 2.
  23. Dr Who in his many guises. He has only 12 reincarnations, we are told.
  24. Sir Robin of Loathing.
  25. But when they need each other most that's when they're *Real 'n Ready*.
  26. Dudley and Spencer of *77 Sunset Strip*. He was Suzanne Patray.
  27. Doves.
  28. Marion Kirby of the *Tipper* series and her dog was *Red*, a St Bernard.
  29. Popeye.
  30. He slid down a fire pole then jumped onto the piano.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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- Terence Tingle is a communications studies at Newcastle Institute of Technology.

# AFI AWARDS: THE CONTENDERS

Reading the article that appeared exactly one year ago in *Cinema Papers* "The AFI Awards: Into the Twilight Zone", it is evident that 1992 has so far at least, been kinder to the Australian Film Institute's endeavor to stage its annual Awards than previous years have been. This time last year there were many debates about the very future of the Awards: the ceremony had neither a venue nor a broadcast; there were several significant films that didn't show up in competition and there were audible growlings about the sorts of films that were nominated and the very judging procedures. The words "I, indeed, there is a first year" — "wait for a while at least a vintage decade."

Though these remain areas of contention, the many changes to the structure and judging criteria of the Awards that were

introduced last year by AFI executive director Vicki Molloy, seem to have deflected the criticism that the Awards as they'd casually put it last year were "too tiny and not useful to the industry." Accompanying a query by the Screen Production Association of Australia over the inclusion of one of the most nominated films, *The Year My Voice Broke*, the AFI has taken steps to overcome the kinds of biases that threatened the Awards' existence.

Amongst the changes, this year sees the best film judged by industry practitioners and the introduction of a new panel judged entirely by the general membership of the AFI. Accredited industry practitioners vote in their own area of specialization, as well as for best film in the feature and non-feature categories. Producers and directors are eligible to vote in all specialist areas, all which there are nine (screening, direction, screenplay, acting, costume design, cinematography, editing, music, production design and sound). Through the introduction of pre-selection procedures, accredited members only have to see the four films nominated in their particular area of specialization. According to Molloy, there are two main benefits of the changes. Filmmakers and industry personnel have much greater involvement in the judging of awards, through the pre-selection panels composed of members of industry associations and public, and the post-group



TALE OF RUBY ROSE: Melba Joanne and Chris Haywood



GROUND ZERO: Josh Thompson and Colin Firth

voting procedures. Unlike previous years where some commentators often perceived industry personnel from seeing all the films necessary for them to vote, now they need only see the four films that have been nominated in each category.

The newly introduced award is a special AFI Members Award (most popular film) and also includes non-feature categories (short fiction, experimental, documentary and animated) which have also been pre-selected by panels. Shorter feature films have been entered. As well, those are TV awards for best television (for which 20 were entered) and miniseries (14 entered), judged by panels sitting in Sydney and Melbourne, respectively, and each composed of eight members.

According to Molloy, post-screenings at the national screenings would seem to indicate that the streamlined procedures have attracted a lot of active film practitioners and the changes she claims, have been very well



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**Film Victoria congratulates all  
the 1987 AFI Award Nominees  
and is proud of its association  
with:**

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***FEATHERS***

---

***GROUND ZERO***

---

***TO MARKET, TO MARKET***

---

***PAINTING THE TOWN***

---

***SLATE, WYN & ME***

---

***THE TALE OF RUBY ROSE***

---

***WARM NIGHTS ON A SLOW  
MOVING TRAIN***

---



**FILM VICTORIA-  
Best Performance in a Supporting Role.**

---



THE YEAR MY VOICE BEGAN: Louise Clamant and Jeff Mendelsohn

received. The Awards ceremony will be held at Melbourne's Palace Theatre on 9 October and will be relayed on ABC-TV. The format of the ceremony is not yet known. Bob Pentland (its producer and director) and Greta Ryle (its executive producer) both known here for their collaboration on live entertainment telecasts at Countdown, will produce the show.

However, the core points of this year's Awards stem from the presence of two films, and the absence of another. The Year My Voice Began, it has been claimed, was eligible for the foreign film category as it was made in part of a package of films for television. The film carries nominations for best film, direction and screenplay (John Daugh), actor (Noah Taylor), actress (Louise Clamant), supporting actor (Jeff Mendelsohn) and editing (Neil Thompson). Molloy confirmed, however, that "on the basis of material as provided by [the producer] Kennedy Miller, the film will remain in competition. The film it seems was made on Stereo with Dolby sound on the understanding that an institute would be sought if the film was suitable for commercial release. BFA President Ross Ramsey was anxious to have down the contention, claiming the association recently sought clarification of the AFI's guidelines for the film's eligibility.

On the other hand, Dogs In Space was not entered as the Awards, while several others were entered. Candy Reginato, The Manupaki - Howling I, With Love To The Prisoner, To Me, Stanley, Casanova, The Almighty Clumpy Man) but failed to receive

nominations. Several other films were not ready to take for the screenings held during July and August.

Dogs In Space producer George Rieve said that because the film had already been released, there were no direct benefits to be gained from participating at the AFI awards, and "the cost of two prints and the entry fees was a sufficient deterrent.

Interestingly, the four films nominated for best film (Guard Zero, High Tide, The Tale Of Ruby Rose, The Year My Voice Began) have also been nominated for direction (Michael Patterson and Bruce Mylne, Gillian Armstrong, Roger Scholes and John Daugh respectively) and, with the exception of The Tale Of Ruby Rose, have figured prominently in the original screenplay (John Cudgeon and Joe Sando, Laura Johns, John Daugh, respectively) and editing categories. Only two films were eligible for the category of screenplay adapted from another source, including David Williamson's screenplay of Travelling North, which to the surprise of many, failed to win nominations for best film or direction (Carl Schultz). In the non-feature categories, nominations for the various categories are stated by Friends And Enemies, How The West Was Lost, Musical Interiors (documentary), Crum In Love, Cancer 204, Henry (animated), Landlords, Nine Coloured Cuts (Landscape), Shoppingtown (experimental), Dreams In Glimmer, Portents, Portents For An Epiphany, Spontaneous (Short Fiction).

Paul Kahane

## 1987 AUSTRALIAN FILM INSTITUTE AWARDS

### FEATURE FILM NOMINATIONS

#### Best film

Guard Zero

High Tide

The Tale Of Ruby Rose

The Year My Voice Began

Best achievement in direction

Guard Zero - Michael Patterson and

David Johns

High Tide - Gillian Armstrong

The Tale Of Ruby Rose - Roger Scholes

The Year My Voice Began - John Daugh

Best in special category

Portents - Pamela Goldstein

Guard Zero - Alan Cudgeon and Joe

Sando

High Tide - Laura Johns

The Year My Voice Began - John Daugh

Best performance by an actor in a

leading role

Guard Zero - Colin Firth

Travelling North - Les Roberts

The Umbrella Woman - Bryan Brown

The Year My Voice Began - Noah

Taylor

Best performance by an actress in a

leading role

High Tide - Judy Davis

Travelling North - Wendy Hughes

Travelling North - Judy Davis

The Year My Voice Began - Laura

Johns

Best performance by an actor in a

supporting role

Guard Zero - David Pennington

Travelling North - Les Roberts

The Umbrella Woman - Steven

Wright

The Year My Voice Began - Jeff

Mendelsohn

Best performance by an actress in a

supporting role

Travelling North - Les Roberts

High Tide - Les Roberts

High Tide - Claudia Karvan

The Year My Voice Began - John

Henderson

#### Best achievement in costume

design

Travelling North - George Liddle

The Year My Voice Began - Anna French

Travelling North - Anna French

The Umbrella Woman - James

Keefe

Best achievement in

cinematography

Travelling North - Les Roberts

Guard Zero - Alan Cudgeon and

Joe Sando

The Umbrella Woman - James

Keefe

Travelling North - Les Roberts

Best achievement in editing

Travelling North - Les Roberts

Guard Zero - David Pennington

The Umbrella Woman - John

Scott

The Year My Voice Began - Neil

Thompson

Best original music score

Travelling North - Les Roberts

Guard Zero - David Pennington

The Umbrella Woman - James

Keefe

Best achievement in production

design

Travelling North - George Liddle

Guard Zero - Alan Cudgeon and

Joe Sando

High Tide - Laura Johns

The Year My Voice Began - John

Daugh

Best achievement in sound

Travelling North - Les Roberts

Guard Zero - David Pennington

The Umbrella Woman - James

Keefe

Travelling North - Les Roberts

Best achievement in production

design

Travelling North - George Liddle

Guard Zero - Alan Cudgeon and

Joe Sando

High Tide - Laura Johns

The Year My Voice Began - John

Daugh

### NON-FEATURE FILM NOMINATIONS

#### Best documentary

Friends And Enemies

How The West Was Lost

Musical Interiors (Part One)

Travelling North

Best animation

Crum In Love

Crum In Love

Crum In Love

Crum In Love

Crum In Love

Crum In Love

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Crum In Love

#### Best achievement in animation

How The West Was Lost - David

Pennington

Travelling North - Les Roberts

Travelling North - Les Roberts

Travelling North - Les Roberts

Travelling North - Les Roberts

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Travelling North - Les Roberts

"...THERE'LL ALWAYS BE AN ENGLAND AS LONG  
AS THERE ARE  
CHARACTER COMEDIES  
LIKE *WITHNAIL & I*...  
...AS DELICIOUSLY WITTY  
AND SOPHISTICATED  
AS IT IS  
OUTRAGEOUSLY  
FUNNY"  
J.A. THORP

*WITHNAIL  
& I*

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Who is Chip Dexter, and what has he got to do with Andy Warhol, Lassic and a Canadian filmmaker working on his first feature script? JILLIAN BURT finds out the answer from

# GERALD

Chip Dexter is a fictional coving reporter assigned for the second time to investigate the latest and latest incarnation of Gerald L'Ecuyer. Gerald L'Ecuyer is a Canadian filmmaker who is taking part three of the Chip Dexter chronicles — a short film entitled *The Cultural Circus* — as the inside circuit, beginning with Toronto and Tish. He is based in New York and has been an assistant director on Andy Warhol's cable TV show (including Warhol's rock video for The Cars) and reports his conversations with filmmakers for *Screening Magazine*.

L'Ecuyer's first Chip Dexter movie cost \$50 and was a Super 8 movie of eight minutes. The second Chip Dexter movie was made while he was studying cinema at Concordia University in Montreal and was 14 minutes long and cost \$800. "That was me a whole series of pranks. It was kind of cinematography at the Canadian studies. I've learned and I got the top prize at my university. It was like a showcard. It was 12 short stories of Chip Dexter, either points of view, or stories, or people he was interviewing. Some were actors and some weren't. And that got us quite a major grant from the Culture Council for the Arts to develop a script and keep going. They didn't like me because I ran out of money twice. Family do they stick with someone that long. They really had faith and it paid off and they're really excited about the film. They're just excited to death."

Chip Dexter is more than a character in L'Ecuyer's disposal. He's even like a complete philosophy and reflects a generally reported attitude that is present in L'Ecuyer's work. He was a researcher on radio with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation while at the school and Chip Dexter spilled over into his radio work. "That's when the mixing of the journalism, documentary, historical facts really interwove. By day I was getting concerned as to be factual and to be accurate and to use words properly and not be wrong and be absolutely true to the facts. And then at school there was the opposite, all go at any principle or concept you have of what is formal and forget it. So I was involved between the two and it became a very interesting tension. I used Chip Dexter in political cartoons

type, more '70s talk in it, very straight, factual, developed, sort of counter-answer later. There was absolutely no laugh track, so whoever got it, got it and whoever didn't didn't."

After film school he moved to New York and started working at the Factory with Andy Warhol. In his third Chip Dexter movie *Rebel Berlin*, who appeared in many of Warhol's movies from the movies, plays Chip Dexter's mother. New York performance artist Ann Magnuson, who has appeared in Susan Seldinman's *Superstardust*, *Soaking Susan* and *Making Mr. Right*, and opposite River Phoenix in *Barry Lyndon*, plays the psychiatrist that Chip visits because he is having trouble distinguishing fact from fiction.

L'Ecuyer wanted to "make a film that would capture what a conversation would look like if it was could be photographed. I also wanted to make a funny film, even if it was in a dark way." He shot the film as a sound stage in New York city with "sets modeled after old television episodes of *Lassie*". *The Cultural Circus* is a mixture of another texture presented in an original way. Everything is completely unexpected or viewed from an unusual angle. Chip Dexter is reviewing material from his life (he is heard but not seen, and the narration is by L'Ecuyer) with his analyst. The darkest moments with *Rebel Berlin*, as a delirious mother calling her son-in-law the brother of Chip's childhood, are the most usually funny. The filmmaker shows young Chip as ridiculous and pretentious and reverent about frogs and pieces of glass. The animal ballet, or the concept of analysis, is described in a charming, dignified performance by Ann Magnuson. It's the sort of movie that is completely personal and complex and contradictory and has a late-release effort. It is memorable in the most insistent sort of way.

"I write all of my films and one of the things that I think is kind of interesting — coming out of a journalistic background — when you're writing for films is that line between fact and fiction being blurred. What you've got a character you live with him all the time. Chip is always there with me. I'm

always talking to him and feeling the words through his eyes. It's almost though that to say things that I would normally find too embarrassing to say. And Chip is allowed to talk about his body and things like that, where I wouldn't dare."

"What I wanted to do was tell people that almost everybody's family has a great story. Everybody has a chortled story, everybody's got what they think are skeletons but are really a great story. It's also in the way of telling it. You don't have to tell a story in a traditional way to get it across. I feel that people can fill in the holes a lot."

L'Ecuyer talks to filmmakers that he admires and wants to find out more about for interview magazines. The year he's done the cover story about David Karp and interviewed David Lynch, among others. "The quality involved with being a good journalist are exactly what you don't want to have when you're doing a creative film. I've always felt that you either do or you report and that's where the danger comes in for me. I have to temper myself at the time and that's hard. And also at every one of these interviews I have to resist the unbelievable temptation at the end of the interview to say 'by the way I happen to have a tape of my work here.' You have to resist because there is no point in it, they've already given you so much that the purpose of the interview is an end in itself. In terms of my own writing it helps. It really does help. I hear so much advice along the way. It's a very confusing kind of people but I'm just making up my own rules and so far so good."

*The Cultural Circus* was first shown at a private screening at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in May this year and later that same night on cable television in New York. As a result of that screening L'Ecuyer is currently working on a treatment at the next Chip Dexter movie as a feature. "It's about Chip Dexter and his best friend. His best friend is a kind of special kid who was an every block, who used to wear baggy shorts and was too skinny for his age and was too smart or too dumb for regular schools. I was always especially close friends with that child. This time Chip Dexter and his best friend go off on an adventure."

# L'ECUYER



# THIS JAR

In subject matter and approach to filmmaking, Derek Jarman has always been an innovator. ANNE-MAREE HEWITT talks to him about 'footpath movies', money, British cinema and his film about the painter Caravaggio, soon to be released in Australia.



I don't feel anything for filmmaking at all. It started off being a joy and ended up being the affliction in my own life. I began as a happy-go-lucky home-movie maker with my friends. Slowly, as I moved into what one calls 'movies', I found a world that, although it had a sort of camaraderie, was horribly mercenary and hierarchical. I've not really had that with my films (I'd had a taste of it working on *The Devils* with an really big budget) but in a way Caravaggio pointed in that direction. You could feel this other world hovering in and around it, the world of financiers and money. It had taken seven years to get that film made and in the end I thought, 'Is it worth spending seven years on any subject?' I went back to the Super 8 camera because I realised I was not going to sit down and write another script, which we all know is a charade, no way do films ever look like these scripts unless they are being television movies.

Caravaggio was meant to be your entry to the mainstream, the beginning of cinematic tale commercial British cinema.

There isn't a British mainstream. There's no British cinema, it's a complete myth. British cinema is composed of four or five people or six generations (film as film, not TV) and four or five of the 'old guard' from a time when 'cinema' did exist. It's a cross of hallucinations that is draped with the illusion of coherence. If there was an industry as such, you would get a coherent path one could follow, with people working from one film-to-the next. This is not in *Go back 10 or 15 years* and it's the passage of *Requiem for a Dream*. Then the screen was a very difficult one, the cinema was in the wilderness. Where had it all disappeared to? I don't know. You could name Ken Loach, whose body of work came out of the *Grange*, and perhaps John Topley. It will contain a string of individuals. If you think about it, there isn't even a younger generation. I'm 'Young British Cinema', I'm 40 years old, the same with Stephen Frears! We're talked about because films have, I'm not talking about 'film'. Don't think that I exaggerate it, I'm

Photographs by Gerald Scarman from Derek Jarman's *Caravaggio*, published by Thames & Hudson, \$39 pp.

# MAN MAN

more interested in underground film, or what might be experiment, whenever you like to call it. I simply call it very low budget cinema because I think it is actually part and parcel of the movement. I like to cut it off like that.

So where are the famous filmmakers in this wonder? I don't come someone like Alex Cox — he made *Sat And Nasty* 10 years after it happened and that seems a very American way of making a movie career. It is so incredibly juxtaposition, you may as well do *Coraggio* and go back 400 years or 180 it is the incredible thing about British cinema at the moment — hardly anyone is actually reflecting the services here. The trouble with my filmmaking was that I was stuck in the services and *Coraggio* was made because I had to stick to that film to make it, so I'd become a leading movie maker. I was, in reality, born to make films about the issues of now. I read somewhere, "Derek Jarman opens art film and all other Renaissance stuff", and I can understand how that can be written. I couldn't catch up with the rhythms as I wanted to stay with the project. Now I am rather glad I couldn't because they were pretty bleak and when I did catch up I had a better perspective on Thatcher's Britain, which is a disaster misrepresenting as a nation.

But your film seems to always have a foothold in the present. Even when dealing with myth as message, the backward look at Avalon, they have the sense of being contemporary. Perhaps this is due to the nature of sexuality they contain.

The thing about sexual politics is that normally it can become ridiculous, because it is never a closed that it is one huge spectrum. It was inside things in a way that is impossible, so that all you get is denunciation there. (Laughing) You know I became "Pete Pan Sapper" and that's it. Don't use the word "gay" and if you do prove it, cross it out, because the thing about it is that although it can distill a few ideas it also makes one a target on many levels. Forceness is a complex matter, I think that is a much bigger area involving half the human race and way after that can be put from the other half.

I was never politically straight forward, it was difficult. My background is very difficult so to run the politics of English politics. The basic politics of them about my film is that I cannot see making them in *Saper II*. If I have made my political gesture, that's the end. Yes, it was far more troubling against the industry situation to find a way around the blockade, yet in my given time I was thinking this should at least give some "what" — something to a student of film who have absolutely nothing. They can see someone who is making films in *Saper II* even though I've made those films which have appeared in the Berlin Film Festival in competition.

Offer determination to continue to produce low budget cinema through media other than films.

has given Derek Jarman a greater affinity with young filmmakers. Not only is he willing to be a thinking sphere of someone, but he is accessible. To the young actor who stands here in the street with a camera, or those who bring their work for him to see, he remains friendly and enthusiastic. This openness is part of his view of film as a process rather than a product, an attitude which is a motivating force and keeps him in contact with changes in the film culture.

Media subjects have also kept me in contact. They are adverts really, not specifically about products but also the people trapped inside these adverts.

Even though I'm not very good at making these things go comparison with the glossy process you see what they have done for me is put me in touch with all the new technology which I could not have had access to otherwise. You was a right when you said that with something like *The Queen Is Dead* it is difficult to decide whether it was a promotional video for The Smiths or a Jarman film that had The Smiths music on it enough that it was much more the latter. The record company wanted the video, not *The Smiths*. I said I would make my film and asked the band (via the promoters) if I could use their



CARAVAGGIO: The Sick Bluebeard

music, I never actually met them. So we went away to make those three short films in an experiment through rules because I wanted to make *The Last Of England* that way. It was rather like taking out a palette or a paint-box. We used every sort of technique you could imagine to see what the state of technology was for taking Super 8 and video through to film. I don't think anything happens in that film that hasn't happened in what you might call traditional neorealism cinema but it was the ease and despatch by which we could achieve those effects that was interesting.

Pop videos have also provided the means to liberty. Though I have not done very many, two or three a year, they have been a stabilising factor. I was able to employ all the people who eventually worked on *Convergence* on them, so as a group we were consciously putting together although we weren't making the 'big' film.

There is a striking difference in the conditions of the image between the 'big' film *Convergence* and your 'smaller' films, say *Angelic Convergence*. Is this due simply to differing modes of production or more formal construct?

A lot of my work is very much a painter/filmmaker 'looking', whereas with *Convergence* it's quite tends to counter that, creating a manner. *Angelic Convergence* in particular is extreme concentration on looking, on detail, so in that film nothing really happens apart everything is simplified. If someone moves a hand it becomes most important. There was no idea of narrative when we were shooting, it moves because the people in it move. (Laughing) I call that film a 'looksmith movie' rather than a road movie. It was, of course, shot on Super 8, just me, the camera and a few wires, which does involve more freedom. You can just drill through the summer, making your pace on anything.

With *Convergence* there was a full crew and a tight to work shooting schedule, that does change a lot, so I was trying something different. It's definitely made in a more traditional manner, in the way of a film like *Scum Of Arc*. If

anything, it's closer to the essence of a revenue movie than an auteur movie, in as much. It shows a constraint of camera movement with those old films.

Coming from a design/painting background do you find your films are more interested in styling, art direction and 'the image', drawing meaning from that rather than being strongly narrative?

What you are saying is in one sense true. With *Convergence* I was making a picture live through the paintings rather than his actual life. Although his life is quite well recorded it is not very dramatic. Of course some parts are. He was a murderer — an element for a story — yet most of what we know is how much his paintings cost, how large they had to be, which isn't really going to hold an audience? So this difference lies in the fact that I wanted to realize the 'money' through the paintings rather than the way of traditional narrative which would be the reverse of that.

In another sense it is simply that I never have had my money to make my films. In fact I ended up the entire amount of money I'd spent on film making ... we shouldn't talk about aesthetics, or money in all that moment? I've spent less than a million pounds on my films altogether, including the awards, *The Last Of England*. To make nearly six feature films within that budget, knowing that a low budget film nowadays in this country is two million pounds, more than twice what I've ever spent, I had to work out ways around the constraints this imposed. So the economy played a large part. It's not possible with a very low budget to have a very strong narrative. If not wanted a car chase the film would have had to be only a day chase. So I worked closer to home, in areas I knew well, developed from background influences.

(These influences came from a disciplined childhood growing up on a military base, to Slade Art College and his first film job designing the sets for Ken Russell's *The Devils*. That intervening through his own career is the constant quest for

finding and securing. The creation of the TV/film link through Channel 4 is the epitome was not in showing the plight of independent filmmakers, yet because still remained on the margins).

Channel Four at their inception said they wanted to make low budget independent feature films, yet I could get all the filmmakers of the movement who would say 'Why didn't they help me?' They failed to support us at all, Julian Temple, Bill Douglas (until that year), Ron Fick, Sally Pooley, it goes on and on. I had made the most films of anyone in the British cinema that were genuinely low budget and genuinely independent (there's), *Sebastiane*, *Juliane* and *The Tempest* and they didn't support me! They did support those in their own backyards, those in television who knew how to manipulate it. The independent didn't understand it and so no-one knew who they were talking. What was the 'wild west', the open space, where filmmakers seemed quite free in the movement, was suddenly closed off. The idea was that they were going to script it and make it longer. The money was, of course, that the 'odd-balls' that used to wander through this area were shut out, and I was one of them. They did, in fact, make 'new' cinema but we were left to fight back with less money.

There is usually a sense of movement in the work you produce with so little money.

It isn't movement, there's no great secret. Anyone can make a film with five pounds and a Super 8 camera, and with a bit more money it can be just one frame via video. It's just that people are reluctant to approach things in a certain way. The notion of 'filmmaking' is very unimportant and structured so that nothing actually gets done. Very often of money are spent in order that producers can be in the right restaurants, doctors pull rank on us, so to be called a star. All that which has nothing to do with the life of the film, what of work or anything, it's just the big grading industry.

My criterion for films is not whether I like them or not but to feel that the people who made them, really needed to make them. You can tell that what you watch a film, what has the open was there or so close to their hearts, like *The Tempest* was to my life, that they adopt it. If you can feel that someone wanted it and their friends got together and made it, then that is me. I called. That's my criterion when looking at the cinema. Otherwise I am not interested. It is a situationally a new focus any side of the fence, for there is nothing on the other side, it's a desert.

In the cinema there should be many voices but the system won't allow it and you can't really change that system. It's like Bernard said, 'We failed completely, socialism was going to change the world but we didn't change anything.' The book *My Last Days* is so wonderful because it is so honest about such things. So living as the 'day is kept every' for this small project and that other low budget film, and it carries on from generation to generation, that is all that matters. You know that sometimes someone breaks through, like Bernard, but most don't. I don't make my films for everyone in the world and I'm not a TV artist who says, 'Sixteen million watched this therefore it must be good'. That's not my approach to things. I mean 'The Devil's' pace of rainforest and I've watched he has, then his friends, and then the whole world knows about them. (Laughing) Could this happen to my little film?



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**N**ow that you're winding down teaching, where does that leave you? You were this kind of nomad, travelling around, and then located yourself in one spot, in San Diego for several years, just like the cross on the map that says "You are here". It's almost as though you were reacting to something or against something... to what happens now?

I don't know. I really don't. What can I say, I have the sense that the kind of effort I have been involved in more or less in the last 10 years, and prior to that with Jean-Luc Godard, has been a very difficult endeavour. If you want I am someone who has mainly functioned throughout his film career as a film essayist and the things that I do are film essays. It so happens that essayist reviews are the most revered sub genre or mode of expression. Why? Essentially because they are absolutely 'at home', they're garage films and totally non-commercial. Take *Quelque chose de certain*, more so than *Polo and Cézanne*, it's a film which is absolutely, from its inception, signalling itself by the fact that it's not going to make a penny. Thus, your dialogue with the production apparatus is immediately muted because competition is something that cannot be ignored. There are very few film essays you can count them on the fingers of your hand. Jean-Luc Godard functions in part as one. But one should I forget

that Jean-Luc Godard occupies a place in the history of the cinema which is also the place of Leonardo Da Vinci in the history of art. So that whatever Jean-Luc says, ensuring that he casts his persona as eternally embattled and needy, Jean-Luc is someone who has no problem in terms of production. Then you have someone like Chris Marker who, in fact, my work is closer to in many ways. Chris functions a little bit like me. I suspect — I don't really know because he's a very elusive man.

Then there are people like Straub and Hudis, who I think should also be considered as film essayists. But their images are exemplary. They might be the most genuine of the great film makers in the sense that the type of disclosure that they get and the type of exposure that they get is more and more reduced.

In a way, the problem is that in the last 20 years the film essay has found its possibility of substance through television. Essentially, it is a detached sector of big television outfits that have enabled the film essay to exist. The problem is that, to take Rounin as an example, here is a film essay which has a strong consideration or a clear emphasis on formal problems, on the formal problems of the craft and, generally, the people who can support the type of work that I do are few and far between because the reality of the television outfit is also the reality of a very conservative aesthetic. You have the situation in which

# WILL TRAVEL

When **JEAN-PIERRE GORIN** arrived in town for the Melbourne Film Festival, there was no match. His passion for investigation, his polemical response to almost any subject put before him, his knowledge of the filmmaking craft, gave audiences here the sense that he had landed from another planet. Indeed it remained this way until the final weekend of the festival when the Wim Wenders juggernaut rolled in. On the one side, Wenders' prize-winning *Wings Of Desire*, a big film working toward the big idea; on the other, Gorin's idiosyncratic *Routine Pleasures*, a "film essay" which demonstrates, among other things, Gorin's love of small-scale epics, private obsessions. But the dust didn't have time to settle before the two filmmakers had made their exit, one of them cynically vowing that when he returned the queue outside the cinema would be for his film.

In Jean-Luc Godard, Gorin once found another match, working with him in the Dada-Verbov group in 1968-70 (Paris, *Veni d'est, L'été in Italia*) then together on *Tout Va Bien* and *Letter To Jane* (1972). It is however a period he is hesitant to discuss: his response to a question concerning Godard at a Festival seminar was, "We have this terribly insane relationship, I mean . . . Phew! Unless you charge me as my analyst, I won't say anything more."

But for his two films screened at the Festival — *Routine Pleasures* (1988) and the earlier *Poto And Cabango* (1979) — he has no final word. For him, the films mark two points in an open-ended system of inquiry, and if you can sneak in a

question about them, it only entices him to further add layer upon layer to their suggestive narratives.

At one level, the films are documentaries: Gorin as narrator observing the lives of others. In *Poto*, it is the life of six-year-old twins Grace and Ginny Kennedy who were thought to have invented their own language and were consequently lauded by language experts and press alike. In *Routine Pleasures*, the thoughts of painter and film critic Manny Farber are intercut with the activities of a group of model railroad enthusiasts who explain in great detail the workings of their miniature landscape.

Yet Gorin also knows how to perform, provocatively casting himself as "a drunken bum that grabs you on a bench and is suddenly intent on telling you his life at all costs". He too is a character in these films; fragmented autobiographies which tell the story of a named who left France, travelled in Mexico, Guatemala, the United States, landed a job teaching film at the University of San Diego (with Manny Farber), and then "stayed". And through the intricate imaginary landscapes constructed in *Poto And Cabango* and *Routine Pleasures*, he has continued to take journeys, mental journeys.

The hobbyists from the Pacific Beach & Western Model Railway Association have a tale of persistence to tell — that is their attraction for Gorin, someone who is always shifting, refusing the direct line. Even in interviews, as we soon discovered, he favours the detour.

Kerry Ball and Ruffalo Caputo

there is, on the one hand, the industry — Hollywood and its sub-divisions or its subcontractors — and, on the other hand, there is TV, but to me it's the two faces of the same coin in many ways.

Because my films are done with very little money, I really thought that I would get small amounts of money to be able to construct a certain type of cinema, a certain kind of work, and a certain type of investigation/fabrication. I think the reason why people are so uneasy with my films is they're essentially films that are more interested in asking questions than offering answers. So they have some sort of existential dimension. I make films because somewhere in the process of making the film I do learn something about myself and the world. If I knew where I was going to land I probably wouldn't make the film. So they're essentially process oriented, and by process I mean "work".

At this stage, and this is why I say I don't know, I don't think it's possible to find funding, which begs the question that it is highly possible that the film essay cannot exist as film and has to take the circuit or the document itself and find its mode of expression through the technicality of video, which I think is something very different from film. So the question for me is, do I keep doing the stuff that I am doing, or do I make an effort to find myself in conditions of production and distribution which are more classical? In other words, shall I produce a narrative film

where there is classical distribution, even if that narrative film is not really a completely Hollywood film but what I call the subcontractors of Hollywood. Shall I leave or shall I stay? Shall I be American or shall I be French? A whole set of questions that are marked by a big question mark.

Let's move on and talk about *Poto And Cabango*. In a way, it opens *Poto And Cabango* is an answer to *Letter To Jane*. *Letter To Jane* looks like a film that's really planned out, you have that photo of Jane Fonda, you've selected the still from *Tout Va Bien*, and the voice-overs were as though they've been already written and they're just read out. But *Poto And Cabango* is completely different, it's like you just came along and you read this article in the newspaper and you thought, "Well, I'm just going to grab my camera, get into the car, and without any kind of planning or anything, I'm going to go and shoot this film."

Well, I've been trained in exactly the opposite way. My scholarly training was "I used to do my homework", and doing my homework is really like the epigraph to *Letter To Jane*. *Letter To Jane* is a film where the homework is done. I decided that I wanted to put myself in exactly the reverse position, except that

in the case of *Poto And Calcega* — and this is one of the things that explains *Requiem* *Potomero* and in a way pointed me off when I saw the reaction to *Poto* — *Poto* is a trick, *Poto* is a trick through and through.

At the time I was very depressed and I had no work. A friend of mine, Tom Lucky, who was then the director of the Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley, told me that Edward Stern of ZDF (Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen) was passing through town and that if I wanted to do a film I had better find a subject. In the morning I just stepped onto the newspaper where the story of the two was carried, and then I had a very beautiful chat evening with Edward and I led to him I said, "I've got the twins. I've secured the rights. I've seen the kids. I've got the documents from the children's hospital. I've got the film. Let me do the film." Well, Stern rather believed my lie or he didn't. I don't think it's that important. I think that he really wanted me to do a film and he was ready to give me the possibility to do one. But I really had nothing. So first I called the parents which was really funny because the father drowned and you could hear his wife in the background giving him directions, and at first the father was kind of aloof, saying things like "a lot of people and a lot of studios have asked us to do a film, etc, etc." So I got a lawyer friend of mine to call him back and we settled on something. It was also a time when I was coming back into teaching in San Diego.

I went to see the twins, and the first thing that struck me was that they spoke English. They spoke English! The story was gone. So at that point there's two solutions, either you lie, or "Well the story is gone and the film is not going to be made" or, on the contrary you say, "Well what's happening interesting is precisely the fact that the story is not there."

I believe that somewhere along the line, as an essential principle of filmmaking of narrative in fact whether it's narrative cinema, fictional or documentary film, there should be something that is like a black hole at the center of the narrative. There should be something that you cannot talk about, or something that you cannot break which is precisely what allows you the drama. In many ways, I have the vision, this idea, that language as general expression in general is only possible if there is the impossibility of expression at its core. We talk because there is something that we cannot say if we could say it maybe we wouldn't talk.

So I got this idea that I'm going to do a film about something that has already vanished. It's going to be a film about the loss of innocence, and it's going to be something about misable language which is one of our deepest myths; I suspect it goes back to the womb and to the land of communication within the breast or the fetal waters of the mother. And so it's going to be about the loss of the language language and the entrance into the world. What really struck me about the situation was that I was dealing with one of our big myths — the myth that all myths are linked to: that is the virgin myth. You know what is the film of Tati's is that the Wild Child. Basically it's poetic and then it falls into the wild-child-category type of myth. The wild-child myth is basically an adult myth, it's the idea that here is this thing that has the strange mode of communication which has to be brought back into the world.

In the case of *Poto*, first and foremost, those kids were exposed upon. They personally wanted to go out, but everybody wanted them to be the thing that didn't want to go out. Everybody. The therapist wanted them to be Naked. Pure material. The parents wanted them to be, for reasons which had to do with their welfare among other things, their path to the economical basement of their lives. I wanted them to be in a film. The kids just wanted to go out, and in a way, the kids were absolutely fascinated by the fact that everybody saw them as mysterious. They didn't tie themselves in mysterious and also, because they were very pure and naive; they were immediately hurt by the mode of investigation they were attracting. People were hitting on them for a couple of hours, entering their world which had been very sheltered and very closed up, breaking into it and then splitting. My problematic is that I came and I stayed. So that by coming and staying I found myself completely trapped into a whole set of ethical problems that ultimately the film kind of explores.

But I was talking about what pissed me off about *Poto And Calcega*, and it's that people still saw it as a "documentary", when for me it was essentially a short story, a fictional film in which a story was told in much the same way as a short story by Raymond Chandler would be told, with a detective at its center, moving in the case of *Poto*, the filmmaker. Solving a case

which is solved in five seconds flat, but then having to deal with the consequences, the ethical consequences of having solved the case.

There is something else which I think is rather important and I'm going to use implications for the sake of the argument, but it's that I have the sense that cinema is probably worst — that's in a rather liberal classical sense — not only in the fact that it depicts acts of abuse and of power which tear us apart, but even more, for some sort of ontological reason, I think that film is worst. What is generally at stake in film is the domination, the relationship of power of the filmmaker over his material. Most of the time the director of a film is relentlessly adopting the autonomy position as though he is saying, "Here are I and my material. Look at the way I'm harnessing it to death. Look at the way I drive out of it screams of pleasure, and pleasure, you the audience, derive your pleasure from that systematic relationship that puts you into some vicious contact with my material over the material." I have the sense, and once again this is a kind of liberal composition and I'm really simplifying things that are more intricate than anything else, but I have the sense that it would be interesting to make films in which, as an element of the problematic, what would happen is that the filmmaker, instead of being a dominating factor, would suddenly be a dominated factor where the material would impose on the filmmaker in a certain way, the filmmaker would have to be broken or torn away by the material. And I think *Poto* is that.

**So what you want to do is challenge that measure of exploitation?**

Yes, but I don't especially intend to challenge it in problematic terms. The only way that I have to challenge it is to find myself drawn into the film and then to end up flushed out of that one century. Good-bye, power position that is really given to me by the fact that I am the filmmaker doing the film. It's a rather intoxicating experience in a way, which I might ultimately decide to spare myself.

Let's say the problematic of documentary is really the problematic of respect. You have to show respect to the people and the situation that you describe. In order to show respect you have to give weight, to show respect is either to put someone on a pedestal or to put someone down — for me they are two sides to the same coin. It is to show the extent or the range of emotions and behavior that the situation necessitates in you in the relationship to those people. As you're absolutely drawn into the process, you become the marker that enables the audience to locate itself in the process, which means that I do not as well looking like a fool in the films that I make. I think it's absolutely essential in some way.

In *Poto* the parents are described as naive and vulnerable, you get the sense that this is a milieu which is both caring and cold, repressive and supportive, alone in its descent and at the same time with a certain type of dignity, what is important to me is that idea of giving the range, or giving the weight, in many ways I try to set up emotional obstacles in my films where ideas and feelings are transformed into each other at rather great speed. I think it's really important to show how much you love your subject, and at the same time to show how much you're motivated by it. It's really important to show your struggle to try to relate to it, to find your way through it. But what ultimately brought me a little despair was that *Poto* was already a coup. It was a losing coup. There's nobody in that film that doesn't look incredible, and the kids were absolutely fantastic to look at and to be with. But, somewhere along the line, the subject of *Poto* had its own drama. Here was a case that was recorded in the newspapers, a little story in the daily gazettes, and it had its own case, it had its own drama. But because I had been in the saddle for quite a while, I wanted to make a film where people would ultimately like me, where they would say, "Wow! This guy who had this reputation as the dominating angel of his revolution is ultimately human." I had no doubts about my humanity, but a lot of people seemed to, and I wanted people to ultimately care for the twins, or to have the sense that I was a decent human being who was trying to do a decent job. And then I got very pleased off with myself because I thought, "Well, this is easy anybody who is not a fascist could have done a great film with *Poto*." I did a film which I think has enough originality to stand on its own two feet. But after I did it I said, "Well, forget that, next one is going to take people and a subject that is as dry as dry toast. It's going to take people that nobody would give a

second of attention to, whose activities would be left as utterly boring, and I'm going to do something with it. I'm going to take the subject which will have less juice than *Poto And Cabengo* and do something which would be more complex, more layered, and more expending than *Poto*.

#### How did you find the group of model railway enthusiasts for *Roscoe Plessance*?

Basically, it's that idea I've long expounded upon, which is that there is no lack of subject matter, you just point your two feet firmly on the ground, you extend your two arms and you wheel around on your axis, and that only defines the possibilities of subjects that you can reach. If I'm someone who walks or travels intrinsically around Southern California, but not by driving, a lot of freedom.

I know I had this second film to do. Initially I wrote a treat called *G.F. Joe*, and I knew the film was going to be about my Americanization. I didn't know exactly what that film was, so I tried this and I tried that and time was passing by and money was being spent just waiting for the subject to happen. Finally one day I just walked onto the Del Mar Fairground, which I really liked, for reasons which have to do with architecture. It has some very nice pseudo Spanish, Moorish, hacienda type architecture, like the kind of architectural fantasy that set designers had in the 1930s, and characterizes a great deal of the Southern California landscape. I just went there, and there's tons of leisure activities that happen on the weekends, even during the off season.

I wanted to do a winter California film. I wanted to do something which had to do with the notion of landscape. I wanted to talk about geography, but I didn't have the means to go traveling so I had to talk about geography from where I was. And so on this weekend during the winter there's tons of activity, for instance, dog obedience training sessions in the middle of the night and that kind of stuff. Finally I found these guys. The minute I looked at I said, "Wow! This is it! Here we have something which may be one of my defects, and it's the need of this sort of encounter with the subject, which is a very practical, pragmatic encounter, where you walk into a space and you sense that you're going to have to explore that space. It's like meeting someone or falling in love with someone where, essentially, the object of your love gets always individualized on the background of something that you encounter at large. I guess an exotic kind of film about Southern California.

#### Did you have any fear or was it a sense of adventure?

It was adventure, although the fear was like, "Jesus, you have to hurry up because the film is supposed to be delivered in a month." But more a sense of adventure, I just stumbled onto these guys. There was this hunger, and in this hunger there was this box, and in this box there was this landscape that was very weird, and there were all these guys that were making this box, who looked like they were rejects of a Hawks or Welles film. This is a film about men because the other one had been a film about women and my relationship to them. There's something very, very personal in *Poto* in terms of seduction, relationship of seduction which is something important in my life. So there was also the idea of doing something about my relationship to men, which, to tell you the truth, I hadn't really thought about because most of my consciousness or my access to the world, I thought, were always transacted through women and by women. So there it was this idea that I was going to do something about men and my relationship to them.

There was this activity which was a because mixture of play and work. There was the reality of an object — the man — which has formed the United States, but is now out of date. So there was this idea of this big object being reduced yet forming very large in the minds of these guys. There's this idea of doing a film about obsession, which is an extremely tough nut to crack because if you ask the obsessed what it obsesses them, or what makes them tick, that last they can do is smile at you, as though they are saying, "How can you not understand why I'm so obsessed by what I'm obsessed about?" So the dialectic becomes very dangerous in that you are suddenly forced to match your own obsession at discovering the obsession of the other. But I'm not someone who's obsessed by board.

But in a different way you are obsessed with something else. If

we take *Poto And Cabengo* and *Roscoe Plessance* and the way you place yourself in the films as both character and narrator, which relates to detective fiction, more to a literary movie than filmic, the subject or the activity that goes on tends to stand as a metaphor for yourself. *Poto And Cabengo* deals with language and your relationship to that language, being a foreigner who has to deal with a language that isn't your own, and *Roscoe Plessance* is somewhat different, it seems to have moved on from there, and it's marked by the line "I'm not quite American but I'm no longer French", and so you're trying to identify yourself in this landscape.

The thing in *Asiento* is that on the one hand, this is a film about landscape, this is about the American landscape, and in a way *Roscoe Plessance* is a direct and polemical answer to things like *Race, Place, It's Slaying*. "Well I'm sorry, I don't have the means, I can't leave! I can't buy Mustangs, Koolhaas. I can't buy Sam Shagpat." But I don't need to go to Mountain Valley. Here I am stuck in Del Mar and I have to deal with this landscape, one that I have all the more difficulty understanding because it doesn't seem to unfold with the depth of history I am used to with the European landscape.

But there very clearly a trick is played which people don't seem to get, and which proves in a way that in a certain point the film fails. But the trick is to say, "Wait a minute! What characterizes the American landscape is not a series of coffee-table book shots. Take a good look by Koolhaas and a good cameraman and you'll get that kind of spectacular stuff which you could do in Australia, in Malaysia, wherever. Suddenly something else happens. This landscape that I'm looking at is the landscape of imagination. Wait a minute! You're seeing those guys but at no point do you see them outside of that moment on a Tuesday night, that has been endlessly repeated over 25 years, in which they play their desire, their pleasure, their competition, and in which they play out the mythical position as engineers. And you engineers not engineers not inventors inventors! The guys that have the power to move things, and the power to move these little objects is in some ways the power of their own imagination to locate themselves in this landscape. There's something at stake here, somewhere along the line what characterizes the American psyche is the art of misrepresentation.

Here is a culture that is profoundly nomadic, and I don't think that it's very different from what you get in Australia in the sense of having to face and define yourself in this enormous continent. Here is the tribe of guys who have got these little wooden dolls that they move around, and that is the thing that gives scale to the incredible landscape which has so little historical depth. So there is something there which is not simple. Let's travel, let's go on the road, let's travel from Mountaint Valley on down to New York City, back and forth and what not. Instead, what is the landscape of imagination. What is that specificity of the American imaginary?

Then something discovers itself, that bizarre alliance, a back and forth between the mythic French and American. It is the idea of the foreigner because, in some ways, and I suggest there's the same feeling here, everybody in the States is a foreigner. To be a language is the most consistently shared feeling, existential feeling that Americans have about themselves. They're always coming from somewhere else. When you ask Americans where they come from, generally they'll give you at a first level another city they departed from, and then what they'll tell you is what part of Europe they come from. So you're not a foreigner, you're an insider. There's the metaphor of the box. You're inside the hunger, but inside the hunger there is a situated bin. In that bin there's another box, so the dialectic becomes. How much inside is inside? Where do you get that ultimate specificity, where is that what you discover is that the origin constantly recedes.

In the process of doing some preparatory work, I had said to myself, "My dear J.P. it's not very interesting, or it's not very smart to constantly reanimate yourself in front of those guys as a Frenchman." Okay, we know it, you get a slight accent, they tell that you're Maurice Chénailier or Maurice Chénailier's son. But there is something else, ultimately what the film leads onto is the artistic imaginary. *Roscoe Plessance* is a film that puts me in contact with what it is to be a filmmaker or to be an artist, which, at the level where I am, is certainly something which gives again every minute myth about creation.

Let's take those guys and some of the stuff that interested me. One machine that has enabled a tribe to maintain its cohesion for 25 years. I'm someone who comes from a time where action

was collective, and that's the sales, but all the groups that I have known have long died and dissolved the selves. Here is a group that has maintained itself. Two, this machine takes 12 men to be manned. This is not an individual machine, this is a machine which exists only in as much as it enables a collectively to handle steel girds. There, this machine contains \$250,000 worth of equipment, \$250,000 of tools which have been put together by people who are lower middle class, ex-army navy military, retired, working class, unemployed people. They come and they put their individually-owned object of desire in a machine that only functions collectively, and they leave it there. They don't pick up their tools, they leave them there. So somewhere on the Del Mar Inlandway comes that object which enables Chester, raised ex-army man, to come every once in a while to recharge himself in this leisure dream in which you play out the dialogue between childhood and work. That kind of stuff interested me.

**What is the nostalgia that you refer to in *Double Happiness*? Does that relate to the nostalgia of these men?**

I think it is a combination of everything. It's the nostalgic machine that is on display. There's a certain nostalgia of a country which has a very short historical span about its own past, and I would anchor it somewhere in the 1930s. The 1930s is like where the dreams of work and community had an enormous importance. At the same time, I think that nostalgia to an imaginary construction of this nostalgia which I suspect is essential to understand the conservative times of Reagan. Reagan is basically the same guy as most of those guys, he is a kind of Horatio version of the nostalgia impulse that those guys have. There's an enormous amount of dignity to that conservatism — what I describe in the film but, probably conservative people, but it's to see what the conservatism is really acting out, and it is not only something repressive.

But there is also my own nostalgia for several things, for a certain type of narrative in film, for assembly scoring, for films that explore their own processes, flat out films. Then there's the nostalgia that Father evokes. All that functioning at its own rhythm, all this interacting at that moment of space and time, all that trying to define what the times are.

I think one of the things at stake in the film is a feeling very characteristic of the night as I feel the night is about a certain sense of the province, which is wonderful. We as all provincial and we all feel provincial in as much as we feel that there is, or should be, a center that we cannot really grasp because somewhere along the line we've also been persuaded that the center has ceased to exist. So we'll live our provinciality in a way kind of frustrated, anguished way. There is a centre — ideological, federal or societal — from which the main bulk of culture, ideas and production seems to come. Information is spread all over the place. We don't know how to make sense of it. We feel like we're in some sort of gigantic, suburban, provincial limbo. We're distanced from the world by the representation of this world. In a way the film tries to address that question.

Also characteristic of the night is the idea of the privatization of our dreams. Because the dream has stopped to exist and we can only dream in existence, we in the practicality of our lives go back into those very small units — family units, friends. Take things like video. It seems to me impossible to think about cinema rights now without seeing the fact that very clearly people see films more and more in the privacy of their own homes, on their VCR.

Privacy is privacy upon privacy upon privacy. You talk about the private obsessions of a group of guys of whom you'll know very little about, ultimately. Never at any point do I give myself the right to trespass beyond the border they themselves have assigned to their imaginary. At no point is any kind of rapid investigation done, I take those guys very seriously. I take care at what they want to be and at what they want to show which is to be the engineers of the Pacific Beach & Western Model Railway Association. I don't go into Corey's kitchen. I don't touch Chester, his first daughter, his backing wife. I don't go into the divorce of George the 44-year-old unemployed who lives with his mother. I give George the glory of being the engineer of that railroad.

Then there's the privacy of Barber, an ultra-private partner who does those big narrative convales, where the narrative is just an inch, a certain path on the canvas which gets interrupted by another path, full of self-absorbed references to checks and



**POTO AND DABONGO** The news

counter checks of his own life, a kind of mosaic spread of his life, like a map. The privacy of this guy who is a novelist, he was the greatest filmmaker in the States but his work is unknown, and his paintings, by and large, are not that well-known.

Then ultimately the privacy of J.P. Coster, who is like a drunkard team that grabs you on a bench and he's suddenly silent on telling you his life at all costs. I'm very sensitive to this. One of the charms of life for me is to go into contact with people who suddenly start talking in very precise and specific terms about a life I completely ignore, and that I really don't care that much to hear. But suddenly this discourse gives me a sense of intimacy, or most an idea of intimacy than the reality of intimacy explored and completed, so you've got a film which is private on private on private, and there is something understanding for people in that process. But for me there are more things said, in this film, about the state of things than in a lot of other films that I have seen.

The use of the train enthusiasts, an one wife, and Manny Barber, on the other, brings to mind something E.J. Thompson wrote of Manny Barber, which is that his mode of thought is analogic rather than binary, and, in a way, what you're just said is that if you proceed by a binary mode the film is going to be closed, and it would probably be closed from the very beginning.

That's really the big difference. Most film function with what you call binary. I would be more precise by saying it's an "either/or" system. You present and there's supports and you choose either/or, this or that, and then the thing progresses by closure by successive closure of possibilities. In my case I have the different sense which I see in Manny's paintings and which it's more an and... and... and... and type of thing, which I think has very much to do with love.

The question that love is about, that desire is about, that lust is about, is precisely this kind of maneuvering, instead, where you



always discover something a lot that gets you off in the object of your desire. And what characterizes the object of your desire is that it doesn't tend to have wings. It doesn't tend to be a woman who has an absolutely stunning body, stunning face, stunning voice, stunning hair, stunning legs, stunning breasts. It could be something rather stupid and normal who functions simply as this incredible Pandora's box. You look at someone's face and there's a million and one associations that it produces. Thus, the possibility to desire is constantly in generate and it's maybe the opposite of the old idea of romantic love which is linked to class and doom. It is the idea of the eternity of desire and also of its agony.

I'm someone who goes back to the thirties. It is a very interesting period in film-making history. It is interested in work, which I think is the last repressed notion. You can show more or less everything in film right now, and pornography has done it for us by essentially focusing on some sort of sexuality, on short cuts so far to where the explosion is supposed to be. The films of the thirties, on the other hand, are all center all the time, in some ways, and one of the things I like about them is the idea of work. It is also a very famous period of film where women are portrayed in film as powerful forces, as characters able to hold their own in tough circumstances.

It's also a period that has a lot of train films, if you can call them that.

That's true. But the relationship is one of the things I could not avoid. It's also why I did the film. I'm not especially passionate about trains, but cinema and trains are co-substantial. The first film ever shown is of a train entering a railway station.

There tend to be three prevalent elements or tendencies in your films. One is the references to silent cinema, for instance, the last shot in *Radiation Pleasure* duplicates the well-known Lumiere film of the train, and in *Porn And Cabaret* it's the way

the music works: the second element is the way the films relate to detective fiction, and the third is the fact that the subjects of your films are very localized. It seems these elements form a certain relation that tends to define the fact that you do not want to make distinctions between documentary and fiction.

I don't believe in the dichotomy between fiction and documentary because I do not think anybody is naïve enough to believe that what's on the screen is anything that is an image of the real and not the real itself and that film is space on time, or manipulation of space on time. It is not this kind of innocent and alien activity, but behind it is a certain kind of manipulation. The problem is to make the manipulation apparent, so that it can be focused, instead of having the audience constantly challenged over the fact by something that pretends to be innocent. That's freedom to see. The reality is that I don't mind being the manipulator, but what I want is for people to know what my manipulation is and how my manipulation develops itself.

But what's more central to the two issues is the idea of narration. What is this to be a story? What is it for the screen to light up the darkness to be full and the film to last for a certain amount of time.

There is also something else at stake in these works and it's that I always conceived them as a certain attempt to rediscover narrative mechanisms for myself. To say to myself, "Well, it would be kind of interesting to do exactly the same thing as a completely non-documentary context, with actors and constructing the whole thing from the beginning."

The thing I've mainly been working on for all these years is the idea of layering. How many layers can you put into the subject? Because I really think that the problem we're facing right now is this incredible accumulation, surplus, of information, and that is the dramatic notion. How much do we know at any given moment on any given thing? Once again the differentiation with Jean Luc in our recent work is his idea that surplus is avoided because there is so much accumulation of information, what fails by the surplus is the very idea of being able to incorporate that surplus into one coherent story. So, somewhere along the line Jean Luc maintains the idea of the story as the sphere of coherence, which I don't especially maintain. For him this overall shapes the narrative and it puts people in some sort of despair. In my case, this accumulation of information motivates the idea of narrative, but the narrative becomes plural, instead of "coherent" which is basically the narrative model which Jean-Luc has both rejected for and refused there is not even a problem you just do an and and and system that radically accumulates the layers. I'm really interested in layering.

You're working on another film . . .

I'm working on several things.

The film I've heard about is one where there are a number of characters. The first is with the wife of the guy who caused the McDonald's massacre in San Diego, the second is using an actress to portray the mother of Lee Harvey Oswald. It's like we can see progressive stages, for instance, *Coma and Image* (Photo And Cabaret), *Coma and Landscape* (*Radiation Pleasure*), and with this it seems to be going getting closer to the American psyche, and it's a very dark psyche, but it's through women.

It's the idea of the bystander. It's about two women who lived in the proximity of coffee, and who ultimately end up having to bear the weight of the crime. But I don't think that film will ever see the light of day. There is one film which is called *Real Estate* which is more significant about the ongoing transformation of the landscape. The film was going to be like a road movie between these stories.

Then, I've written a gay movie which takes place in Finland and New York, and it's this truly writing in a type of Philip K. Dick mode. Basically it's a "meander" of a film by Sam Fuller called *Pick Up On South Street*. It's the story of two CIA guys who are obliged to pose as porno filmmakers for a night in Finland because they are passing the porno tape into Russia with this information about government work.

I'm also trying to secure the rights for a story called *Myk Of The New Future* by J.G. Ballard - a writer I profoundly admire. It's also expensive. I don't know if any of this will see the light of day, but I've got ideas, will travel!



ONLY ANGELS HAVE: BRIGITTE GATZ as Flying Dutchman

## WINGS OF DESIRE

*Wings Of Desire*, Wim Wenders' film about Berlin, angels, a trapeze artist and the importance of being Peter Falk, was the high-profile festival film of 1987. It concerns two angels (Brigitte Gatz and Otto Sander), unseen by mere mortals but able to hear their innermost thoughts, one of them falls in love with a trapeze artist (Solveig Dommertin) and decides to trade in his wings. To the sound of Nick Cave's "From Her to Eternity," the movies from eternity to here, **PHILIPPA HAWKER** talked to Wenders about Berlin, the director as painter, endings and cream pies.

Did you intend to go back to Germany to make a film?

Not really. I left New York after *Pain Train*. I had been in the United States for seven years and I felt not in order to make a film in Germany, but because I thought I had finished the scenario I had wanted to do in America.

Did you feel satisfied with that?

Yes. I felt satisfied. I felt that I couldn't have any more ideas. And also I felt that I wasn't going to go on living there much longer. So I found myself back in Berlin, not really because I had intended to go back, but because my production office was there. I had produced all my films except *Almanac* from Berlin, so I went about to do an working on the next movie, which was going to be a film that I have been wanting to make for almost 10 years: a scenario fiction movie. And it was only being in Berlin, in Germany for the first time since 1977 that I realized I was in the situation of looking at my country and the city of Berlin from a certain distance. And when I was working on the other project I decided that I should do something about coming home. I thought I could postpone the scenario fiction movie and thought it was nice to return to do

something in Berlin, in my own country. Another year or I would no longer be in that privileged position of someone coming back and seeing things with different eyes. Any longer and I wouldn't be able to see it any more.

And where did the notion of the angels come from?

I really can't put my finger on it. Maybe the whole angel idea came as a way to find a point of view for the film about Germany and in Germany. I think the angels came this universal possibility of looking at things and being a voyeur to they wanted to, and they have a very objective way of seeing, and in another way, it's very intimate and subjective; they can listen to people's thoughts.

When did the idea that they would want to become human come into it?

That was there from the beginning too. It was almost like the natural idea of the whole thing. I also wanted it to be some sort of love story, and initially, the point of departure for that film was in a way the last thing we shot on *Pain Train*. It was the scene where the mother gets involved with the little boy and Hans-Joachim comes up to the room where he is waiting for her

and he walks up to her and takes her in his arms. It was the last thing we shot. And I felt when we were shooting it that through this scene, somehow I had got to a point, emotionally as well as a possibility for myself, where it would open up something new for me, that I could feel another day. I knew that whatever I was going to do next had to start at this point.

You had alternative endings for *Pain Train*, even though didn't read?

Yes, but that was more in the editing. But the last scene I actually shot with Hans-Joachim and Hanne, that was the strongest experience at the end and whatever the ending of the film was, I knew that that would be the departure for the next film.

What was it about that scene that you felt had to carry through?

Maybe it was the idea of acceptance. The boy was accepting the women. At the same time, together with the scene of Hanne and Hans-Joachim, we shot a scene of Travis getting back into his car and driving off and in a way Travis was driving off, representing not only himself but also all the other men in my previous movies. He was taking off all of them. He disappeared. And in a way I was left with these girls two, and these other two were accepting each other. Everything came to a stop at this moment when they embraced each other. I can say this now, it wasn't all that conscious. But in a way it was logical that I made this film when everything came to a stop. For the first time *Wings Of Desire* takes place in one place, in one city, in that everything comes to a stop: a man meets a woman and she says to him, "Stop, hold it. I have to tell you something." And she tells him about his desire to love, and it is a coincidence, but as a necessity.

You arrive at a very different point at the end of this film from where you've arrived at in the past.

Yes. But I'm not that surprised, because I know that from the outset. I know that was inevitable. I took the moment very seriously at the end of *Pain Train*. I know that it would be very different from then on. With Travis's departure, I knew I was onto something else. So maybe it was logical that I came up with a totally different point of view. Everything had to be questioned in a way. As the very end of *Pain Train*, all of a sudden it was that everything was possible. Love is possible, you don't have to run away from it. You can come to a stop without

having to flee that it is going to ruin the end.

Just to get back to *Wings Of Desire* for a moment — did the angels have to be male?

I seriously thought about the other way round, and having the angels female, but it didn't feel natural. And in a way to have this woman as a central character, very much alive and doing something very dangerous, it just felt much more right. I wanted her to do something dangerous, so that the angel would look at her, would feel moved, like a guardian angel. And I also thought that angels should feel attracted to the idea of risk because it is something that they don't know about. And I liked the idea that this woman was wearing wings. So, I thought she was alive from the beginning and I felt the need for the man to want to become alive, for the angel to want to leave his eternity and become mortal. I was more familiar with it. And in the beginning there were more angels, some of them were men and some of them were women, and then I reduced it because the whole thing was so real anyway. There were 20 movies hidden in there potentially, and I had to eliminate something.

How did your collaboration with Peter Handke work?

It all happened rather fast. From the moment I stopped the preparation of the other movie I was working on to the first day of shooting it was two days and a half month. I had something on paper in two or three days, just a basic idea, and the basic idea was three angels and one of them becoming a man, and what this would mean to him. So I called Peter because I knew they would speak not just in everyday language, but in a special way, almost an old-fashioned language. I called him and I said, "You're the only one who could write the dialogue for this, come and work on the script with me." He had just finished a book, and he said he was exhausted and was tired, and couldn't write a script at all, but that he would come over and perhaps write some of the dialogue for the key scenes like the last scene where the angels meet in the car, and they talk about what they have seen that day, and one talks about his desire to end his eternity. And that's where we started with a handful of scenes that I really knew about.

We started shooting and it was really natural, but I knew the whole thing was only going to work if it was done spontaneously, if it kept the spontaneity and the



quality of a daydream. If we knew more than our angels, so to speak, we would lose it. So we went into the whole thing badly prepared. I knew it was important that the movie be made much more like a poem or a painting, structured like a painting. But it was desperate for the production manager and the production designer, they were ready to kill themselves, they didn't know what they were doing. There was a stain involved in doing it that way, of course. But it's the way other people work: if the writer or the painter knows exactly what they were doing the next day they would get up, so why shouldn't that be a method for filmmaking? And then again, there were the actors: they were there, and that made the whole thing very concrete. They lived the whole idea and they turned into angels, and that's not a part you can play during the day and go home in the evening and be yourself. It was quite a challenge for them.

Of course, in filmmaking there are so many other people to consider and you can't really treat them like they are just paint, so it is difficult, but you can keep up the idea of spontaneity and that was important. And we had something solid from the very beginning, and that was the few scenes Peter had written. In the first two weeks of shooting we had to shoot the crucial scenes because they had to take down the set for insurance reasons; they had to fold the tent in mid-November. So there was some sort of structure there too.

**Was the ending the only one you envisaged, the only one you shot?**

We shot one other. The other angel also became human, carried away by the enthusiasm of his friend. . . . The scene that we actually shot was a battle with coins, just, and you can still see the table with coins on it. Because if you've been an angel for eternity and all of a sudden you

can touch things, the temptation to take a coin or two and throw it is enormous, I think. It's the first thing an angel would want to do. And in the end I thought it was more important that one of them stayed as an angel. It was the farthest scene in the movie, and we kept it in the cut for a long time, almost to the end. The other ending was more like gunpowder, it was gunpowder anyway, the whole movie. Placing a plate at night with no movements.

**Do you regard that ending as optimistic?**

Yes, because really everything is possible. You leave with high hopes for this couple.

**The glimpses you have into other lives in the film are very different. On the one hand you have this couple, and then you get these sudden glimpses into other lives, you see them for a second, and then they're gone. How does that difference work?**

It's like I said before, any of those characters could become another movie. Anyone could become the hero. The young man who falls himself, the people in the train, anyone of them could become the hero, the movie could just stop there, and you wouldn't see anyone else any more. All these people had such little parts, but everyone was a possible leading character. It was a cinema society, so to speak. It was really a strange thing. The motorcycle guy who was dying in the street, we only shot for one day, he came for one day for his thoughts, but it felt like he had been there for the whole movie.

**The ending is in some ways a closing off — you are given a certainly about that couple, but you don't have the same sense of certainty about the other people in the film.**

But it's there potentially. And those two people, they speak for everybody else.



Zhang Yimou, *Yellow Earth* cinematographer (left) and Chen Kaige

## CHEN IS MISSING

**CHEN KAIKE**, the director of *Yellow Earth*, was this year's festival guest that wasn't. The official line handed in the festival program at the end of May on a cable from *Shi Fangping*, the head of the Chinese film bureau, was that Chen was "too busy" to come. It was passed on to the audience attending the film's first festival screening by Wu Ming, an employee of the state-run *China Film Import Export Corporation* on leave from his job to do film studies in Melbourne. His brief was stated by several organizers to speak on behalf of the absent director. That Chen might be too busy to arrive was perfectly conceivable, for he had been working hard on post production for his third feature, a film to end May. Unfortunately, it just wasn't true.

Days before the festival's cable was sent, Chen said friends how much he was looking forward to his first trip to Australia. He also said that he'd have no trouble taking a five weeks off in early June. A week or so earlier, he reported that although he hadn't even been officially endorsed of the festival invitation by the authorities as far as he knew, neither his "work unit" at the *Peking Film Studio*, nor the film bureau had any objection to his coming.

If they didn't have any objection, however, somebody apparently did. That somebody may well have been Deng Xiaoping, the leader in charge of the Chinese film industry, a man who could never be accused of over-enthusiasm towards the younger generation of film directors that Chen represents. Then again, Deng may have merely been splashing, or rather discreetly underlining, a policy originally set by Hu Yaobang, former secretary general of the Chinese Communist Party. At the end of 1985, after *Yellow Earth* had won awards and praise at a number of international film

festivals, Hu banned the film from further participation in film festivals abroad. He reportedly did this after an overseas Chinese supported the film be allowed to compete for an Oscar — "we will not compete for awards with the bourgeoisie," the Party chief was supposed to have said. Certainly, he explained, in the last analysis it is a matter of class consciousness: there was something deeply suspicious about a film which went over so well with art cinema audiences in capitalist countries. He and other officials were particularly concerned with the image of China as presented in the film — poor, backward and superstitious. Never mind that the events portrayed took place more than 30 years before the communist took power. Despite the fact that Hu himself was forced to resign in January this year, his policy has never officially been dismantled.

The print of *Yellow Earth* screened in Melbourne was the one obtained by Roman Glick for commercial release in Australia. It's a lesser *Yellow Earth* but it's at least as good as the way of expert editors. The Chinese, therefore, had no say in its participation in the festival. They could, however, avoid even more attention being drawn to it by preventing the director from coming.

Though hard for Chen, but also for us, as he has a lot to say about the new movies and those of older young filmmakers in China. He can be quite critical of *Yellow Earth*. For example, he now considers the film to be overly sentimental, its main characters too opaque like symbols. Chen is also a great second-rate, full of fascinating details about the special problems — farming, artists and bureaucracy — faced by Chinese filmmakers. Chen grew up, literally, in the film world, for he father is a retired director and their family has a boardwalk within the walls of the *Peking Film Studio*. Like many other Chinese in their mid-thirties, at the youth Chen was caught up in the radical political upheavals of the Cultural Revolution. His years in the countryside as a "reeducated urban youth" opened his eyes to the shocking poverty and backwardness still apparent in rural China today, and his representative emotions, *Yellow Earth*.

Chen doesn't like to talk much about his second film, the big *Panda*, which he was forced to change quite a lot of its subtle meaning, but he is confident that he third, recently finished film will be his last job. Maybe we will have a chance to see it, and here, at next year's festival.

Enda Jelinek



BIRTH ANGEL: Bruce Carr and Peter Falk

# THE WRIT

The writer has often been the neglected figure in the filmmaking process. In this issue, Cinema Papers looks at the phenomenon of the critic-turned-filmmaker, discusses the tyranny of the script and the debate on turning novels into film. We also talk to writer Gustav Hasford, whose novel has been

## What is the relationship between film criticism and filmmaking? ROSS HARLEY considers the question in relation to the critics-turned-directors of the French New Wave

*"The cinema has a special mission. It's not to entertain, it's to give us to make films, but filmmakers who turned out by doing a lot of film criticism."*

— Eric Rohmer

*"Writing sometimes says of making films."*

— Jean-Luc Godard

*"Story cannot be broken as to be able to define its art by its writing."*

— Roland Barthes

What could the role of film criticism possibly be in relation to the actualities of film production here, today, in Australia? An obvious question perhaps, but nonetheless perplexing, given the current set of circumstances which prevails over contemporary local film culture. Indeed, who even hears these terms mentioned in anything more than a passing lip comment, a vague wave to the general direction of those more serious, and dare I say tedious, questions which never quite get answered and yet never really disappear. If film culture, or perhaps more correctly the cinema *par se*, is essentially a living, breathing complex set of interrelationships — between films, authors, ideas, money, places, myths and material forces — it certainly often appears to have no discernable logic. Its logic is that of the chance connection, and try as certain sectors might, the connection between criticism and filmmaking remains lost more often than it is found.

Local critical history is full of attempts to either somehow formalise, make sense of, or else try to rethink the relation between what is written and what is made on film. The writings of Sylvia Lawson, Scott Murray, Margaret Morris, Susan Dermody, Les Jacobs, Adrian Martin, Rolando Caputo

and others have on a number of memorable occasions presented well-considered arguments for, and critiques of, the practices of reviewing, criticism and commentary as they relate to our local film culture industries. Although this kind of work is by no means the winning ticket over some imagined or real enemy, it has provided the ground upon which most much of what I have to say. My comments and reinforcements of the *Culture du Cinema* and *cinéma vague* stories are not presented outside the context of the present local film scene, but as a more rely upon it. My fundamental argument is that the making of criticism and the making of films need not necessarily be considered as mutually exclusive, and moreover, that this kind of interaction is not without historical precedent. That the *Culture* group developed a particular way of considering the relation between thinking and doing cinema is not of course reason enough for us to take it as an exemplary model either. The local film scene has had more than its fair share of pure-fire models which failed as soon as they were adopted, as if all film culture required was a new model instead of a complete overhaul — which is what it really needs.

The last thing that I would want to see is the forced imposition of yet another model which is incapable of thinking and working in its own environment. What I am suggesting is that to dwell upon a particularly interesting example of



FRISTIE: David Graham

# THE STUFF

filmed by Stanley Kubrick, learn about the trials and tribulations of TV scriptwriting, and hear from novelist Angela Carter, who has written screenplays for two of her books. In the next issue, we will hear from some of Australia's leading screen writers and continue the debate on literary adaptation.

how critical reflection on the cinema gave rise to a new and sophisticated critical cinema cannot be devoid of relevance to our current critical condition. Perhaps we could even adopt Chateaubriand's famous maxim, "Was a politics by other means", and consider the possibility in true Godardian fashion that "Film-making is criticism by other means".

There is nothing particularly new about critics or theorists turning into filmmakers, or conversely, of filmmakers producing critical texts. In Russia, at the start of the century, Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Vertov were each concerned in different ways to reflect theoretically on their own cinematic practice as well as the broader problems of cinematic form and film score. During the forties and fifties

Lindsay Anderson and Karl Reme wrote on American cinema and film practice in the British journal *Spectator*, while in America, people like Peter Bogdanovich, Paul Schrader, Jonas Mekas, and Stan Brakhage wrote serious film criticism either before or during their own filmmaking careers. The study of filmmakers who write and writers who make films is worth a couple of books at least, but I mention them here in passing to convey the sense that criticism and film practice have at least occasionally crossed each other's paths.

However, it is the group of critics who wrote for the French journal *Cahiers du Cinéma* from its inception in April 1951 who gain our attention

here, if not for the theoretical rigour of their writing then for the insightful accuracy and passion with which they argued their polemics. And of course it is the grouping of *Cahiers* writers — Jacques Rivette, Claude Chabrol, François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Eric Rohmer, Luc Moullet and Pierre Rieu — who provided the major impetus behind the much vaunted nouvelle vague of the early sixties. To the critics writing at *Cahiers* in the fifties, the French cinema was culturally, politically and aesthetically impoverished. The notable exceptions were masterful directors like Renoir, Cocteau, Clair, Clouzot, Becker, Astruc or Louis Malle (both the last two occasional writers for *Cahiers*) who were able to make interesting films against the tide of French cinema, which according to Jacques Rivette was "an awfully another version of British cinema". A modernist film if ever there was one, but not so very different from our own situation. Caught in a context where genres have no immediate awareness to cultural reference points, as say the gangster or the western films did in America, a national cinema would have to invent some other way of gaining a life of its own. The task that *Cahiers* set for itself was nothing short of this, though its battles weren't to be waged on nationalistic or masculine style terms as one might have expected. If a new arrangement of the pieces which go together to make up the cinema was to be reached, it had to be on the grounds that cinema itself demanded. The new could only be constructed out of the ruins of the old. According to Rohmer: "For the cinema to have a future, as art could not be allowed to die."<sup>1</sup>

And away to the history of the cinema they certainly were. The *Cinéma du Cinéma* provided a venue for the films of the past to make their entry into the present. To know the cinema is to watch it, listen to it, pull it apart, dream on it, talk about it, review it, to place one film in relation to another. Although an excessive emphasis on critical-filmmaking like Jean-Pierre Melville would claim that you couldn't understand the full significance of Griffith, Hawks, Lubitsch, Ford or Kurosawa unless you saw their films when they were originally released<sup>2</sup> — as of course he had — the *Cahiers* critics tirelessly listed and absorbed the filmic lessons into their writing and memory. Their spent watching movies was considered as an investment in a future filmmaking, whereby the mechanisms of the cinema would be



See How Apparent



GODARD: One standard plus one

become so deeply engaged upon their imaginations that it would distort severely, powerfully, how a scene should be shot, where a light should be placed, or how a line should be said. The cinema was there to be watched and to be elaborated upon, but it was also to be part of what Godard refers to as an established "revolution that might be effected in the aesthetics of moving pictures by the new vision of its history."<sup>1</sup> The essays that Resnais and Godard wrote on Hitchcock later developed into a book on his first 40 films. Resnais's reviews of Lang and Franju, Luc Moullet on Pabst or Godard, Truffaut and Godard writing on Nellys Kay, or Truffaut, Resnais and Resnais on the cinema of Camusacope — all start as part of the art of conceiving film, be it the one in question or some other imagined film yet to be made. Curiously, or perhaps not surprisingly, this art of conceiving, this putting together of decisions as almost identical to the idea of mise-en-scène (literally, the staging or presentation of a scene) is advanced by Godard over a period of ten or so years. Without wanting to simplify the debates around the meaning and significance of mise-en-scène as a critical concept,<sup>2</sup> we can see that there is a certain equivalence between the staging of Godard's critical arguments and the conception of their films. As Jonathan Baskin has it, "if the entire body of Resnais's work can be read as a series of evolving reflections on the cinema, the [present] critical work . . . is undeniably linked with the critical work represented by his filmmaking."<sup>3</sup>

Godard's statements are similarly angled towards the ideal of criticism by other means: "Preoccupying cine-clubs and the Cinema-club was already a way of thinking cinema and thinking about cinema. Writing was already a way of making films, for the difference between writing and directing is quantitative not qualitative . . . Today I still think of myself as a critic and as a writer, in no more than over before. Instead of writing criticism, I make a film."<sup>4</sup>

The tale to André Bazin, the "father" of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, and more importantly here, the writer/ filmmaker Alexandre Astruc, are perhaps obvious. The poetics of the underlying term "cinema-style" cannot be understated, for it was the concept that most caught hold of the cinema's own's imagination. As a way of re-thinking the relation

between writing and the cinema, it was particularly useful in providing an alternative to theoretical and literary terms which predominated much film criticism of the day. Astruc's seminal essay "The Birth of the *Camera-Style*," appeared in 1948 in the *Cinéma* magazine sponsored journal *Revue Poétique*, announcing that this was "the new age of cinema, the age of the *cinéma-style* (*cinéma-poète*). This metaphor has a very precise sense. By it I mean that the cinema will gradually break free from the tyranny of what is visual, from the image for its own sake, from the immediate and constant demands of the narrative, to become a means of writing just as flexible and subtle as written language."<sup>5</sup> The aim of breaking free from the demands of narrative was, however, only possible via a learning of the language of cinema. Its acquisition came via the combined processes of making upon useful groupings of films, analysing and assimilating them, and then reworking them by means of the cinema itself. For this reason, none of the *Cahiers'* critical notices or essays were written in stone as it were. Their published reappraisal of the American cinema in the fifties turned attention towards a large number of neglected films and filmmakers at the same time as that work gave rise to a number of key critical concepts.

It's not my intention to give an adequate account here of the use and significance of these crucial terms — *mise-en-scène* and *politique du cinéaste*<sup>6</sup> — for which I would recommend Jon Hillier's excellent introduction to the *Cahiers du Cinéma* The 1950s collection. Those terms were both coined within *Cahiers* at the best of times. For the purposes of the article we can take measurements to be the way in which a scene is put together — its disposition, the camera movement and placement, the transition from shot to shot etc. As a form of criticism, *mise-en-scène* was never really a theory as much as it was a working method by which films were analysed and made. So too is *politique du cinéaste* (roughly, auteur policy) was never actually a theory, though so-called *auteurs* were basically concerned with evaluating the work of particular directors whose individuality could be discerned across separate films and indeed whole careers.

At the level, the two terms are inextricably linked. "It is with the *mise-en-scène* that the *auteur* transfers the material which has been given to him, as it is in the *mise-en-scène* . . . that the *auteur* writes his individuality into the film."<sup>7</sup>

But *auteur* status did not necessarily guarantee that each successive film would automatically receive critical accolades. That is particularly true of *Cahiers'* attitude to much of the American cinema in the nation. Whereas in the fifties people like Anthony Mann, Robert Aldrich, Otto Preminger and especially Nicholas Ray had been almost beyond debate, in the sixties they were responsible for *cinéma-poète*, and hence not as valuable to the *Cahiers* project. Jerry Lewis, John Cassavetes and Arthur Penn were virtually all that was left of the American cinema, at least if *Cahiers* best film lists are anything to go on. Pierre Kloss's warning — "better good payroll cinema than bad directors' cinema"<sup>8</sup> — may seem strange in the light of *Cahiers'* all-around enthusiasm for *auteurs*, but it actually represents the degree of healthy pragmatism which permeated their approach to theoretical concepts.

The reason why *Cahiers* critics liked the American cinema in the fifties had to do with three films' technical virtuosity and non-European stylistics. By the early sixties *Cahiers* was

complaining that American cinema was becoming too 'Europeanized'. Godard insisted that of the seven American film releases, "nowadays 80 per cent are bad", it around about the same time that Andrew Sarris would have been starting to 'translate' the auteur theory to the American cinema in its country — or what at the time seemed like its country.<sup>10</sup>

By the time Rivette, Rohmer, Truffaut, Godard and Chabrol had all made their first films. In many ways the connections between their creativity and their filmmaking practice were, as mentioned earlier, fairly prominent. Godard's *A Bout De Souffle* was like a moderate version of Hawks' gangster films; Rohmer's *Le Signe Du Lion* fits his study into a pre-given critical niche, but can be read as his homage to Italian neorealism; *Paris Nous Appartient* is Rivette's *L'année dernière à Marienbad* where "no alien can hope to explain the world, or achieve by itself all the possibilities of the real".<sup>11</sup> Chabrol's *Le Beau Sexe* is distinctly Hardy, cocky in tone, point of view and effect; and *Les 400 Coups*, according to Godard's *Cahiers* review in 1959, reached just about all the qualities of the films on Truffaut's ten best list for the 1958. It would be quite a task to determine the degree to which these tendencies were pursued or abandoned throughout their subsequent careers. Though such a task would, I suspect, reveal the degree to which their groping of cinema subscribed to certain critical and theoretical formulations as long as they could be tried out, proven, or else cast aside in their own cinema. In marked difference to the audience descriptions often associated with many contemporary efforts to couple theory and practice together, the *Cahiers* group maintained a playfully adventurous approach to rethinking the limits of cinema's possibilities.

In this light it's interesting to conclude with the variance of the ongoing discussion on film language throughout the decade. Rohmer's approach framed the question in terms of stylistic, meaning that the idea of cinematographic language required the filmmaker "take up a position vis-à-vis cinema which is neither that of the viewer nor that of the spectator"<sup>12</sup> whereas Godard tended to wield the might of linguistic and philosophy of language into his own cinematic work from the early nation onwards. But it is Rivette's discussion with Roland Barthes in 1963 which best exemplifies *Cahiers'* response to the seduction of film theory. The



GODARD Anne-Marie Lenfant in *Scènes A Part*

relation between technical and critical or theoretical knowledge of the cinema is after all a lesson in *Cahiers'* proposed problematic, and the *Cahiers* group was in fact one of the first coherent groupings to begin discussing the relation of aesthetic and linguistic theories to the study of the cinema. Remember, this is only a year before Marx wrote the first chapter of *Pale Language*. How easy it might have been to seize upon this newly emerging discipline and make of it the new all-encompassing critical explanation, as might have been the case at another time and place.

But Rivette's engagement with Barthes is an enthusiastic as it is reserved in its praise of such a project, always aware of potential pitfalls, reductionism and shortcomings. He could agree that "every critic's dream is to be able to define an art by its technique"<sup>13</sup>, but at the same time Rivette compelled to voice his apprehensions: "The idea of the cinema as a language may never perhaps be fully workable, but we have to pursue it all the same, if we are not to fall into the trap of simply regarding the cinema as a meaningless object — as an object of pleasure and discussion which cannot be explained. The fact is that the cinema always has a language, so that an element of language always comes into play."<sup>14</sup>

The idea may not be fully workable, but "we have to pursue it all the same". Perhaps it's not such a bad way of looking at things after all.

## NOTES

1. See for example, Sylvie Lévaut, "Not for the Lovers of us", in *A. Moreau & T. O. Rogers (eds), An American Film Reader*, Scott Murray, original *Cahiers* *Papiers* manuscript reprinted in *Cahiers* *Papiers* 44-45, March 1955, Managua, Mexico; "The Disgrace: A History of Renouncing", *Papiers* June 1955, Los Angeles & Santa Germany; *The Stripping of American* Vol 1 1955, Atlanta, Mexico & Ricardo Caputo, "State of Film Criticism", *Papiers* Jan/Feb 1955.
2. The names of these people has a certain affectively Italian about it when placed next to a larger list of 'unofficial' directors which would add the following in even slightly mentioned: in no particular order: Jean Renoir, Noël Surcouf, Robert Brenner, Paul Merviel, Fritz Weitz, Louis Malle, André Tardieu, Michel Robin, Christian and André Corré, Paul Paulin, Michel Tardieu, Michel Tardieu, Alexandre Astruc, Roger Leenhardt, Alexander Kops, Chas. Ford, Maya Deren, Jean Louis Coeur, Raymond Bellon, Kenneth Anger, Paul Klee, Paul Klee, Robert Bresson, Raymond Bellon, Raymond Bellon and André Tardieu — for names.



MELVILLE The director in his own office. Holmes Davis Melville

4. Quoted in Jan Heller (ed), *Cinema de Cinema, 1950-1980*, Harvard University Press, USA, 1980, p1
5. Méliès would have "I think I am the last living witness in France who has really on behalf of you was American cinema. The film which was released in April 1914 isn't at all the same thing when you see it now since references to cinema in the *Comœdiaque*", in *Sur Napoléon, Méliès, Louisa, André & Wilfrid*, 1971, p1
6. Jean-Luc Godard, *Speech Delivered to the Cinématograph Français on the occasion of the Louis Lumière retrospective in January 1964*, "Thanks to Henri Langlois", in *Godard On Godard*, Barker & Wileing, London, 1972, p284
7. For a more detailed account of the questions of style in the cinema of neo-realism, see Jan Heller (ed), "Introduction", *Cinema de Cinema, The 1950s*, BFI, London, 1985
8. Jonathan Romney (ed), *Seven Years and Counting*, BFI, London, 1977, p1
9. Jean-Luc Godard, "Interview with Jean-Luc Godard" in *Godard On Godard*, op. cit., p121
10. Alexander Jaskas, "The Birth of a New French Genre: la caméra stylo", in Peter Graham, *The New Wave*, Barker & Wileing, 1968
11. Jean "Camera policy" means "camera theory" in the subject of movie design. In general, however, we can say that camera apparatus is constantly tested the polarised success of being able to make certain parts of films more others. The distinguishing characteristic of apparatus is that it governs the film's meaning in direct relation to the degree to which its cultural/technical tells their personality to world view stamped on what might be other various register in a standard genre of movie film. For more detailed discussion of how in *cinéma de cinéma* has been understood into critical vocabulary, see Heller's "Introduction", *Cinema de Cinema, The 1950s*, Barker & Wileing, *Thames of Film*, Barker & Wileing, London, 1974, pp128-33, and Andrew Sarris, *The American Cinema*, Da Capo & Co., New York, 1968
12. John Gaudin, *Thames of cinema*, BFI, London, 1981
13. Despite the enormous preparation of *Seven*'s look, it will not only document the culture of Hollywood film history. Todd McCarthy and Charles Foy (eds) *King of the 35* represents one end of the spectrum of trying to at least the over-the-top *Seven* look had captured, while *Thames and Counting* is a volume summary of *cinéma de cinéma* means the critical analysis of many *Seven* only heavily dealt with by *Seven*.
14. Jacques Rivette, "The Seven Apparatus", in *Seven Years and Counting*, op. cit., p41
15. Ken Baker, "The Old and the New", in *Cinema de Cinema, The 1950s*, p10
16. Roland Barthes, "Towards a Semiotics of Cinema: Barthes on interview with Michel Dabadat and Jacques Rivette", in *Cinema de Cinema, The 1950s*, p275
17. *ibid*, pp283-85



TRUFFAUT: Fancy looking on the set of *Gendarme Gendarme*

## THE WRITE STUFF

"We need better scripts," has become a catchcry in talking about Australian cinema. SAM RONHIE argues that so-called 'better scripts' are often the recipe for worse movies.

**I**n the 1950s in Italy there was a kind of guerrilla war carried on by some film directors, among them Antonioni, Fellini, against the *compramisso di ferro* (the strong script). It was fought in order to gain control of their films from producers (the script was an instrument for governing the film) and in order to free the cinema from the tyranny of the script, of the narrative rules it imposed, and the experimentation and innovation the script seemed to prevent.

What I would loosely like to call the modern cinema, and which I will give some examples of in a moment, has reduced the central place of the script as the key element in the determination of the structure of the film, of its look, its movement, its meanings. From solid outline, often with "luxury" values, the script has become more and more a sketch, bare notation and its language has completely disappeared. The script belongs to a highly unrenowned "dramatic", novelistic cinema which is by now old and tired. By contrast, in Australia, there has been far more time a call for better scripts, better scriptwriters, better dramatic writing, as if in headlong flight from everything that is new and interesting toward all that is conformant and mediocre.

A number of films particularly impressed me at the last Melbourne Film Festival. *The Bookshop* (directed by Angeliopoulos), *Romance Pleasure* (Gloria), *Le Rapin Vert* (Rohman) and *Hydrone* (Rivett). In none of these films does the script have any particular status.

In *The Bookshop*, which is a long film, script elements are few: the dialogue is spare, dramatic events are minimal, the plot is thin, the movement of events is indirect, meanings are subtle and uncut. Much of the pleasure of the film is visual: settings, light, gestures of characters, gestures of the camera. The camera suddenly interests itself in things independent of other narrative or character, things at the *borderline* of the screen itself: the light on a window, the shape of a roadway, a landscape framed by power lines, the disposal of a stream reflecting scale and density in the shot, the deep areas of spaces before characters appear in them and a "dream" begins, or after characters have left them and there is no longer any dream "to make place". What is viewed is massively empty, what is felt is the actual duration of that regard. There are shots which seem purely intentional, dependent on momentary things, a passing mood, a glimpse of something, a reflection of light, a compulsion or fascination of the instant, none of which could have been planned in advance and which the filming could then reproduce. *The Bookshop* frequently moves away from its narrative, towards



POST SCRIPT: Lea Mierza, *Lea Mierza*, *Lea Mierza*

the subject of the fiction than in the subject of its filming which has a life of its own, its own discourses and narratives. The *Beckwith* has no narrative core to bind and dictate every other activity and level of the film and no hard and fast script to bind that narrative.

The other films I mentioned are similar in this way, in their spontaneous, fragmentary, in their structuring a relation towards the narrative rather than simply expressing it, in the fact that they are formed in the process of their making, not beforehand, not made according to plan.

The "dream" of *Rebecca Pflaum* depends on the relations between the filming of it, which implicates the very person of the filmmaker, and the apparent subject which is filmed, the model readers. These relations, of necessity, are created while the film is taking place and largely dictate the film's direction and moves. What becomes fascinating is the shifting line between the subject and its apprehension, between a documentarism and its fictionalization and the ongoing across of these by the objectivity of a reality and the subjectivity of the search for it. These relations change, become unbalanced, unpredictable, they are neither fixed, nor clearly malleable. The film is made of the mixture of elements: the model readers, Gerni moving through their majestic landscape, the autobiographical landscape passages of Nancy Fisher, Gerni's search to find himself in the landscape of Antonia. But as these elements move toward and against each other new things form, new constellations occur as the direct result of their activity of relating, of filming, of editing, of criticism. The sense of *Rebecca Pflaum* comes in the very process of the film and there is nothing before that, it gets worked out as it moves along.

The story of *Lea Mierza* concerns a young woman who is in search of something which she will only know when she finds it; that thing is both material and spiritual, an object and a vision, the certainty of a moment. The film has a plan, but the plan is only a sketch (it is as if looking for something). Within the plan almost everything is improvised — the narrative-bound script leaves nothing over, nothing any more to discover. The film exists between its plan and the improvisation of its details (which forces one to change direction), while the plan tightens its grip, moments and moments disrupt it, re-route it for if the film is sensitive to the improvisations of the human, the human is sensitive to the vagaries of whatever may happen to him, from which she works and forms a plan and to which she returns ... and to which the film reacts. There are the pressures of a world (the word, the script) and the dissolving pressures of desire

(the particular, the responsible, the non-profound). In this philosophical tale of great elegance and intelligence there is another rule, or one that I am imposing on it, a discourse on narrative, on the plan, of everything working together according to plan.

Briefly, *Rebecca Pflaum* contains three essential elements: the Brecht novel *Flowering Heights* as its premise, the theoretical notion and cross-an-acute of the action of the novel to exclude the decor, the settings, costumes, the looks and gestures of the characters, who are double characters (of the novel, of the theatre of the novel) through that doubling *see for everything*; and the third element, which is the film of this theatricalization. So there are three of everything: the novel, the theatre, the film of the theatre. Nothing at all is visible in *Rebecca Pflaum*, nothing stays in its place. While each element is marked separately, they wander between different material domains, different narrative substances. It is not simply that each thing, each element, each character, every line and every gesture is potentially troubled, but rather they move into further multiplicity, into an over sense, a plurality of worlds and times.

Rebecca manages this play of simplicity and complexity, of difference and its dissolution very well indeed, as with the



Anton and

other films I mentioned, what happens only happens in precise, in formation, in 'the act'. In most conventional narratives, scenes are consequential and organized in advance; in these films consequences are more varied, more explosive and they can only be known after. In these films everything coming in the others nothing matters, all is fixed, set, created.

Antonioni called films of this kind (like his own) the "poes" of the cinema compared to the "various" of popular commercial production which permeated the existence of "race", both materially, from the proceeds of 'various', and less materially, as the very reason for there to be a cinema at all. Antonioni was fond of remarking that virtue as its own would be incoherence. What troubles me about the Australian film industry is that it is so virtuous, and, so terribly afraid of vice, with the result, as Antonioni predicted would happen in such cases, that it has become incoherent. The very last thing it needs is more virtue in the shape of better scripts. Besides, I believe that there is probably no such thing as 'better scripts' since the less scripts would be one that would not exist (the absolute of vice) whereas to seek to write the better script is to seek conformity, which could not, by that very fact, be much good at all.

The evolution of the Australian film industry, at least since the mid-1970s (about the time of *Peter Ayling* *Reilly*), has been to make a place for itself within an international commercial framework whose rules and values have been derived from the model of the American cinema (and in part derived by that cinema). Largely for this reason there has been a demand for better scripts.

In the film-industrial situation there is an established order for the realization of a film: from idea, to treatment, to screenplay, to camera script, to filming. The order implies a specific division of labour, of experts, of stages, of responsibilities for which the script functions as the essential plan for that order; it forms the basis for the calculations of cost, of outcome, of equipment, of personnel and it contains the procedures for following out its order, of turning words into images, a story into pictures, and pictures structured and linked into a story. It defines the very function of change in the film.

In a relatively new and inexperienced film industry such as the Australian industry, unsure of its talents but clear about its obligations, calculations have to be that much fiercer, cautions that much more precise; its greater risks usually dictate a high degree of conservatism. The script is not only the key element as a dramatic spectacle, but the evidence in advance for the finished film (the basis on which finance is often sought). To control the script is thus consciousness as to control the film. And the line of control, a control exercised by producers, financiers and funding bodies, is almost always toward the known, the predictable, the safe.

I don't wish to make a contrary call to the call for better scripts, nor to lose 'virtue' with 'vice', to hold up a European experimental narrative tradition against what is being made and considered in Australia, but I do want to suggest a difference, not a complete difference (all 'vice' would be equally incoherent), but the fact of difference, the support, alongside and within a commercial-narrative-dramatic-spectacle cinema, tightly controlled, organized, scripted, fixed, another cinema which, as in the old days, actually serves. Besides, and once again to refer to Antonioni, only such a cinema provides the reason for there to be a cinema at all.

## THE WRITE STUFF

You've read the book, now see the film: from Tolstoy to Nora Ephron, Mary Shelley to Marcel Proust, novelists have been raided for film scripts. But what does the transition from page to screen involve? In the first of a two-part series, BRIAN MCFARLANE looks at the discourse on adaptation.

Everyone who sees films based on novels feels able to comment, at levels ranging from the gossipy to the erudite, on the nature and success of the adaptation involved. That is, the interest in adaptation, unlike many other matters to do with film (eg, the deployment of the cinematic codes or questions of authorship), is not a rarefied one. And it ranges backwards and forwards from those who talk of novels as being "destroyed" by literary filmmakers to those who regard the practice of comparing the film and the novel as a waste of time.

As to the filmmakers themselves, they have been drawing on literary sources, and especially novels of varying degrees of cultural prestige, since film first established itself as predominantly a narrative medium. In view of this fact, and given that there has been a long-running discourse on the nature of the connections between film and literature, it is surprising how little systematic, sustained attention has been given to the processes of adaptation. This is the more surprising since the issue of adaptation has attracted casual attention for more than 60 years in a way that few other



GRIFFITH: Mrs. March and Henry B. Working on *Back of a Yank*



film-related issues here. By this I mean that writers across a wide critical spectrum have found the subject fascinating; newspapers and journal reviews almost invariably offer comparisons between a film and its literary precursor, from the magazine to mass or less scholarly books, one finds reflections on the incidence of adaptation, works across and across, complex and simple, early and recent, address themselves to various aspects of this phenomenon almost as old as the institution of the cinema.

In considering the issue here, I want to begin by drawing attention to some of the most commonly recurring discussions of the connections between the film and the novel.

### Conrad, Griffith, and "Seeing"

Commentators in the field are fond of quoting Joseph Conrad's famous statement of his aesthetic intention: "My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel — it is, before all, to make you see!"<sup>1</sup> This remark of 1897 is echoed, consciously or otherwise, 16 years later by D. W. Griffith whose cinematic intention is recorded by film historian Lewis Jacobs as "The task I am trying to achieve is show all to make you see!"<sup>2</sup> George Blomson's all-but-planning work in the film-literature field, *North Sea Film*, draws attention to the similarity of the remarks in the next of his study of "The Two Ways of Seeing", claiming that "... between the concept of the visual image and the concept of the mental image lies the vast difference between the two media"<sup>3</sup> in this way he acknowledges the connecting link of "seeing" in his use of the word "image" and, at the same time, points to the fundamental difference between the way images are produced on the two media and how they are received. Finally, though, he claims that "conceptual images evoked by verbal stimuli can scarcely be distinguished at the end from those evoked by non-verbal stimuli!"<sup>4</sup> and, in this respect, he shares common ground with several other writers concerned to establish links between the two media.

By this, I mean those commentators which address themselves to crucial changes in the (mostly English) novel towards the end of the 19th century: changes which led to a stress on showing rather than on telling and which, as a result, reduced the element on authorial intervention in its more overt manifestations. Two of the most impressive of such accounts, both of them concerned with ongoing processes of transformation among the arts, notably between literature and film, are Alan Spurgeon's *Poetry and The Cinema Eye* and Keith Cohen's *Film And Poetry/The Dynamics Of Reception*.<sup>5</sup> Both of these offer a rigorous, questioning approach to ways in which the novel appears to have been influenced by the film. Spurgeon's avowed purpose is to investigate "the common body of thought and feeling that unites film films with the modern novel";<sup>6</sup> taking as his starting point Flaubert whom he sees as the first great 19th century exemplar of "uninterrupted form", a firm devotee on supplying a great deal of visual information. His use of imagery leads him to James Joyce who, like Flaubert, respects "the integrity of the main object and ... gives it palpable presence apart from the presence of the observer."<sup>7</sup> This line is pursued by the way of Henry James who stresses "a balanced distribution of emphasis in the rendering of what is looked at, what is looking, and what the looking notes of what the (a, Misses in *What Moves Remedy* sees";<sup>8</sup> and by way of the Conrad-Griffith comparison.



CONRADICOPPOLA: March Street the dump, in *Apocalypse Now*

Spurgeon poses the comparison harder than Blomson, stressing that though both may have aimed at the same point — a compression of image and concept — they did so from opposite directions. Whereas Griffith used his images to tell a story, as means to understanding, Conrad, Spurgeon claims, viewed the reader to "see" in and through and finally put his language and his narrative concept to the hard, clear backdrop of images.<sup>9</sup>

One effect of the stress on the physical surfaces and behaviour of objects and figures is to de-emphasize the author's personal narrative voice so that we learn to read the essentially unmediated visual language of the late 19th century novel in a way that anticipates the viewer's experience of film which essentially presents those physical surfaces. Conrad and James further anticipate the cinema in their capacity for "discomposing" a scene, for showing a point of view so as to focus more sharply on various aspects of an object, for exploring a visual field by fragmenting it rather than by presenting it scenographically (as, as it were, a scene from a stage presentation).

Cohen, concerned with the "processes of convergence" between art forms, also sees Conrad and James as significant in a comparison of novel and film. These authors he sees as breaking with the representational novels of the earlier 19th century and ushering in a new emphasis on "showing how the events unfold dramatically rather than re-present them."<sup>10</sup> The analogy with film's narrative procedures will be clear and there seems no doubt that film, in turn, has been highly influential on the modern novel. Cohen uses passages from *Prozac* and *Virginia Woolf* to suggest how the modern novel, influenced by techniques of Brechtian montage cinema, draws attention to its recording processes in ways that the Victorian novel tends not to.

### Dickens, Griffith, and Story-Telling

The other comparison that trails through the writing about film-and-literature is that between Griffith and Dickens, who was said to be the director's favourite novelist. The most famous account, of course, is that of Hecatt who compares their "spontaneous child-like skill for story-telling"<sup>11</sup>, a quality he finds in American cinema at large, their capacity for verifying 'his' characters, the visual power of such, their enormous popular success, and above all their rendering of parallel action, for which Griffith cited Dickens as his source. On the face of it, there now seems nothing so



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remarkable in these formalisations is to justify their being so frequently presented as examples of the rise that bred cinema and the Victorian novel. In fact Eisenstein's discussion of Dickens' "cinematic technique", including transcription of such phenomena as scene composition and the closing, is really not far from those many works which talk about film language, striking similar analogical poses, without giving adequate consideration to the qualitative differences engendered by the two media, to one of which the concept (eg. language, scene composition) is literally applicable, to the other only metaphorically so.

Later commentators have readily embraced Eisenstein's account. Eisenstein, for instance, states boldly that "Griffith found in Dickens hints for every one of his major innovations"<sup>1</sup> and Cahoon, going further, passes to "the more or less blatant appropriation of the themes and content of the 19th century bourgeois novel".<sup>2</sup> However, in spite of the frequency of reference to the Dickens-Griffith connection, and apart from the historical importance of parallel editing in the development of film narrative, the influence of Dickens has perhaps been over-stressed and under-scrutinised. One gets the impression that many writers, steeped in a literary culture, have fallen on the Dickens-Griffith comparison with a certain relief; perhaps as a way of arguing the cinema's respectability. They have tended to concentrate on the thematic interests and the large, formal narrative patterns and strategies the two great narrative-makers shared, rather than to address themselves,

as a film-centred writer might, to detailed questions of examination, of possible analogy and disparity between two different signifying systems, of the range of "factual evidence" available to each within the parameters of the classical style so craved in each medium.

### Film and the Modern Novel

As film came to replace the representational novel of the earlier 19th century, it did so through the application of techniques proposed by writers at the latter end of the century. Conrad took his assistance in making the reader "see" and James with his technique of "sustained casualness", both with their playing down of authorial mediation in favour of locating the point of view from which actions and objects are observed, provide obvious examples. In this way they may be said to have broken with the tradition of "transparency" in relation to the novel's substantial world so that the mode and angle of vision were as much a part of the novel's content as what was viewed. The comparisons with cinematic technique are clear but, paradoxically, the modern novel has not shown itself very adaptable to film. However persuasively it may be demonstrated that the films of Japan, Russia and Germany have drawn on cinematic technique, the fact is that the cinema has been more at home with novels from — or descended from — an earlier period. Similarly, certain modern plays, such as *Death Of A Salesman* or *Agamemnon*, which seem to owe something to cinematic technique, have lost a good deal of their fluid representation of time and space when transferred to the screen.

### Adaptation: The Phenomenon

As soon as the cinema began to see itself as a narrative entertainment, the idea of transacting the novel — that already established repository of narrative fiction — for a more material yet underlying, and the process has continued more or less unabated for nearly 80 years. The reasons for this continuing phenomenon, as far as film-makers are concerned, appear to move between the poles of mass commercialism and heightened respect for literary works. No doubt there is the lure of the pre-sold title, the expectation that respectability or popularity achieved in one medium might assist the work crossed to another. The notion of a potentially lucrative "property" has clearly been at least one major influence in the filming of novels, and perhaps film-makers, as Professor Raphael wistfully claims, "like known quantities. . . they would sooner buy the rights of an expensive book than develop an original subject".<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, most of the film-makers on record profess before audiences than these. Dr. Wm. Barber, author of the screenplay for Peter Ustinov's *Robt. Hood* (1962), claims that: "Adapting literary works to film is, without a doubt, a creative undertaking, but the task requires a kind of selective interpretation, along with the ability to reinvent and humanise an established model".<sup>4</sup> That is, the adaptor sees himself as owing allegiance to the source work. Despite Peter Raphaelovich's disclaimer about filming Henry James's *Daughter Alice* ("I . . . I don't think it's a great classic story. I don't treat it with that kind of reverence"),<sup>5</sup> for much of the time the film is a conscientious visual transmutation of the original. One does not find film-makers asserting a bold approach to their source material, any more than announcing crude financial motives.

As to evidence, whatever their complaints about this or

that violence of the original, they have continued to wince to see what the books "look like". Constantly creating their own mental images of the world of a novel and its people, they are interested in comparing their images with those created by the filmmaker. But, as Christian Metz says, the reader "will not always find his film since what he has before him is the actual film is now somebody else's phantasm."<sup>1</sup> Despite the uncertainty of grandfictions, of fading audiovisual images that will coincide with their conceptual images, reader-viewers persist in providing audiences for "somebody else's phantasm". There is also a curious sense that the verbal account of the people, places and ideas that make up much of the appeal of novels is simply one rendering of a set of contents which might just as easily be rendered in another. In this regard, one is reminded of Anthony Burgess's cynical view that "Every best-selling novel has to be turned into a film, the assumption being that the book itself 'wins an appetite for the true fulfillment — the verbal shadow turned into light, the word made flesh'".<sup>2</sup> And perhaps there is a parallel with that late 19th century phenomenon, described by Michael Chabon, in *The Dream Thief*, of illustrated editions of literary works and illustrated magazines in which great novels first appeared as serials. There in, it seems, an urge to have verbal concepts loaded flesh in perceptual consciousness.

Whether it is that makes filmmakers want to use adaptations of novels, and filmmakers to produce them, and whatever hazards lie in the path for both, there is no denying the facts. For instance, Moore Biss reports that, since the inception of the Academy Awards in 1927-28, "more than three-fourths of the awards for 'best picture' have gone to adaptations. . . . [and that] the all-time box-office successes favor novels even more".<sup>3</sup> Given that the novel and the film have been the most popular narrative modes of the 19th and 20th centuries respectively, it is perhaps not surprising that filmmakers have sought to exploit the kinds of responses excited by the novel and have seen in the novel a source of ready-made material, in the

crude sense of pre-tested stories and characters, without too much concern for how much of the popularity of the original novel is inextricably tied to its verbal mode.

# NOTES

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Part two will continue the exploration of the discourse on adaptation, and propose some new directions for discussion to take.



MOVIE APPROACH: Great expectations — The Great Story

# THE WRITE STUFF

A small-screen writer confesses: **MICHAEL HARVEY** sets out the trials and tribulations of writing for television

There is a certain look which people give upon learning that you write for television. It is almost that of a bomb-averted populace upon suddenly confronting a dormant enemy stream. Black, unsmiling, and then the final conclusion that someone who moments ago was an unseen, unknown face capable of wounding lives afar was now the mortal, vulnerable and standing before them. A prize to be picked at, consumed, interrogated, and either summarily dealt with or paraded through the streets as an object of curiosity and derision.

The last such time was at a wedding. A perfectly amiable conversation about matrimony, or running a milk bar, or the short-term prospects of industrial lubricants was followed by the seemingly harmless enquiry "So what do you do?" I recall murmuring something about Television and expounding somewhat success in the cinema and literary marketplace. Too late. I had already become a spark on the radar. "Television? You mean, repeat them?" "No, I help ... make it." I desperately switched my attention to the marriage rite, staring about as if looking for the altar, but by now the speech had become a throbbing hip, the music leant and locked on. "Oh, yes? What ... novels, documentaries?"

## SOCIAL OUTCASTS MEET



"Hi, drama ... you know, serials and things." It was now just a matter of seconds. "Oh, really ... and do you act, producer?" "Well, actually ... I wrote them." Bang.

In that brief pause of collapse, perhaps slowly unfurling, I bowed myself for the inevitable critical. The person would hardly ever watch TV and what they did watch they would generally find to be rubbish, apart from the occasional good British program. In vain would I argue that Britain produced the best television in the world ... it also produced some of the worst, just that we tended to see more of the former than the latter. That year on, year out Australian programs regularly headed our ratings lists. That given similar budgets and schedules, Australia (which on a per capita basis was already the most prolific and most efficient drama producer) could match it with the UK, the US, or anywhere else in the world for that matter, and indeed often did. All to no avail.

The arguments exhausted, the revolver pointed to my bowed neck, I would comfort myself with a few private thoughts. Deep down, a certain pride. The pride as performing one's craft in making an unworkable story work, an impossible sub-plot possible. In writing a love scene on the score because there was no money for an extra bedroom set. In undertaking an entire re-write in five days because one of the actors, God bless them (and so thank women have problems), had collapsed from exhaustion. A pride in working (literally) through the night to complete an episode, walking out the front door for a breather at 5.30 am to find one's car had been stolen in the interim, and not ringing the police until 9.30 am for fear of interruption (it happened).

The weapons needed, there would be a few very memorable too. Constructing a pay-off in a line delivered some four scenes earlier, only to find upon viewing that the actor had changed the setup and not bothered to change the pay-off. Cutting back some 10 minutes from a draft because the script editor had timed it so, only to witness the cast performing the work at prominent slow-motion like some Greek tragedy because the episode was now 10 minutes under. Spending an entire weekend (at the cost of all social engagements) writing a lengthy 845 minute-long sequence only to find it later dropped because there was no money to keep the rope for the Pyrexia.

The major reward, the hammer falling, there would perhaps be just enough time to acknowledge a few dollars. Awh! shiny lines, written in speed or in sheer desperation, turned into pure gold by some unknown actor with little of any relevance. Wowsy, over-blown passages, reduced by a script-editor's pen to three lines of terse action. Yet another machine somehow given life and originality because the production team have again managed to make \$1000 look \$100,000. And above all, despite the trials and tribulations, scraps and criticisms, the joy of seeing the result of one's labours, if only for a brief moment, actually working ... real drama ... the right stuff ... working before one's very eyes and the eyes of countless how many others ... as hundreds of thousands of homes ... people captured, entertained, perhaps even stirred.

"Really? You mean 'Scops'?" As I was jolted back to reality, I noticed something strange about my captor's face. It was almost smiling. And the hand was not holding a revolver, rather a bottle, already rolling my glass. "Good, I'm an actor. Can't resist them." Then the realization hit me. I had drifted beyond the money, come down behind friendly lines. It was a fun. I could have wept.



ONCE A MARINE—Gusman Hasford now

## THE WRITE STUFF

What happens to a novelist whose first book becomes a Stanley Kubrick film? **TRACY**

**HAYWARD** finds out from Gustav Hasford, whose first novel has been filmed as *Full Metal Jacket*

*"The fight to make the world safe for ignorance" — The Short Timer*

*"Vietnam: eternal Commission when they see me of Indochina" — The Phantom Shipper (Unpublished)*

**T**he *Short Timer* is an apocryphal, unrelentingly brutal story of a US Marine's warring at Parris Island — "an eight-week collage for the phoney-tough and the crazy-brave" — and his 365-day, short term, tour of duty at Vietnam.

The book was published in 1979. It had taken the author seven years to write, and three years to find a publisher. Vietnam was not a popular topic only five years after the war, in a country that still wishes it had won. Even after publication of what is considered one of the best works of fiction about the war, Hasford was still living in his Volkswagen and working as a security guard in California. And then Stanley Kubrick decided to make a film about it.

*Full Metal Jacket*, Kubrick's title, is a reference to the Geneva Convention requirement that military bullets be fully-cased in steel or copper, so that they cannot expand. Hasford wrote the script with Kubrick and Michael Herr, the author of *Despatches*. The film was shot in England. Acres of land and an abandoned POW camp in Essex were transformed into Hue City at the time of the Tet offensive.

My copy of the Boston edition of *The Short Timer* has a blue text spread on the title page: "Far Timmy from Gus Perth May 1986." Gus brought *Publisher's Weekly* in studio of 50 — analysis on writer's contracts — to the photocopying room where I worked at the West Australian State Library. We got talking, Gus likes to talk. "What are I doing in Perth? Actually I was going to go to Geraldton, but

I decided that Perth was small town enough. I had a leave here [while he was in Vietnam] but a senior officer wiped it just before I was supposed to take off, I went to Hong Kong instead. Vietnam was a working class war. Not even Kennedy's son ever went to Vietnam. I'm writing into my contract for *The Phantom Shipper* (the sequel to *The Short Timer*) that a copy is sent to each of the 300 Congressmen.

"The image of the Vietnam veteran as a cold-blooded psychotic is something the US government started when men were coming back saying, 'The war is wrong — we shouldn't be there.' US government don't say that sort of thing! They had to explain it away by saying that we were traumatized from seeing our friends blown up and didn't know what we were saying. Even so, 'the culture and dehumanized'... I've often been asked in interviews 'How many people did you kill in Vietnam?' Just like that. Actually my body count was a standing pile — I killed in every of them as they did of me."

In an article published in *American Postcard* earlier this year Gus wrote: "Looking back now with flowers hindsight, I hope I hit nothing but trees, and I hope the trees lived. If I did kill a human being in Vietnam, it was a tragic accident or self-defense. I regret it, but I do not apologize."

*The Short Timer* is not an autobiography, however, the main character, The Joker, played by Matthew Modine, has many similarities to Gus.

He is six feet four, a farm boy from Alabama who joined up on short notice at 19 (he had heard from a local on the Draft Board that his number was coming up). After Marine training at Parris Island in North Carolina, he was made a war correspondent with *Lookweek*, the Marine magazine, and served with the same Division as The Joker, though I'm not sure about the Peace Badge on the battle fatigue. I have a photograph of Gus that I thought at first was of Martin Stone, he is 19, handsome and grim, wearing a flak jacket. There are bandages and medical crosses in the background, it is the Tet offensive, and he has just been in battle. It is an interesting contrast to the other photograph the 19-year-old Gus, speculatively, still grim-looking, still in fatigue and something of a crowder ("Once a Marine, always a Marine") on the shoot of Stanley Kubrick's latest project.

The film had been scheduled for Christmas 1986 release, but when Modine broke his arm during shooting and the schedule was thrown by about six weeks, the date was changed to summer 1987. "They only ever launch major films in the US in summer or at Christmas — they got the best box office from college kids on holiday."

Gus says he expects to make about \$1 million from the sale of the film rights *The Short Timer*. "Even a dud film will sell about two million copies in the US — even *Boyz* sold two million! If Stanley was to make the worst movie he'd ever made, it'd still be a Stanley Kubrick movie. Most of my friends are middle-aged accountants and educators, not writers or artists. They make about \$50,000 a year. I've been writing for 20 years — I've really just made the same as they have, but in one lump sum."

By Christmas Gus was still in Perth, not in Laguna Beach in California as planned. He and Kubrick, having settled a disagreement about credits, were still discussing payment. He had finished *The Phantom Shipper*, and was waiting for a response from publishers. I was given a copy, neatly bound in pieces of Swan Lager cartons. *The Phantom* >



MARINE BOY—Gusman Hasford in 1985

\* Rieper was a Marine myth Gus often heard about when interviewing for *Landmark* — men would speak of a tall Marine with a red sash around his waist, fighting with the Viet Cong on the hills. Says The Joker in *The Phoenix* Rieper: "Everyone knew deep down that if we looked at the war as legend and not patriotic or emotional terms, we'd probably all have pissed up with him." The novel accuses a remarkable pilot traitor that is convincing, absorbing and sensitive — I prefer it to *The Short Time*. Gus was flattered, and decided to name a character after me; there is now an 11-year-old Vietnamese prostitute called Tracy.

It was two in the afternoon. Gus had just got up after writing all night, when it is quietest, and there are fewer showbusiness. He talked me into going to see *Landmark* Ridge, a film low on my list that I didn't enjoy any more than I expected to.

"There were a lot of complaints about the language in that, and Marine officers dissociated themselves from it. I got the language complaints too, but I actually loved down the language — everything a Marine says is dirty."

Gus had just begun to write detective novels, and they seemed to be coming along easily. When he gets back to the States he wants to work on a project about *Andean* Barnes, and plans a novel — the Confederate answer to *The Red Badge Of Courage*. There is a third book about The Joker, involving the Vietnam Veterans Against The War movement, of which Gus was a part. Then he'll have that out of his system.

We talk and talk, the sky lightens over the city skyline, five o'clock pagers appear. Gus suggests we walk back around the river and get some breakfast in the city. I haven't slept for 30 hours, and I'm turning green. "You're hit the wall," says Gus proudly. A helicopter hovers over the river, Gus gets edgy. It reminds him of having a remote dream land on his head during a supply drop.

In McDonald's, the first place to open, among flapjacks out of styrofoam containers, Gus starts to reminisce. "At one time I had two dollars a day to eat on — I lived on Big Macs or Kentucky Fried lunch offers for eight months. I was living in a closet in a friend's art gallery — I had my typewriter in there, a bed and a shelf. Another time when I was broke I interviewed my friend — Martin Ellison, he's a science fiction writer, he wrote *A Boy And His Dog*. He didn't mind what I said about him, so long as I didn't mention that he wore showercaps."

A while ago I received my last letter from Gus, he was about to leave, finally, for the States. "The indie blizzard of mafia stars is about to bury me. The trailer to Stanley's movie is showing in America now, and it mentions my name, so the cyborg journalists will be after me to chew all the pain out of me like a piece of gum." He had just seen *Phoenix* ("it's really depressing, the sort of movie I'd like to make about Vietnam"), and enclosed an article he'd written for *The West Australian* about the current run of Hollywood Vietnam films. Unfazed by the numbers, or the competition, he is delighted that veterans named of "Hollywood Jacuzzi Connoisseurs" are getting their voices heard. It has taken this long, he thinks, for the war to be far enough away to be considered history, but, as he said in the last line of the article in *The West Australian*: "History is not over yet, and history collects its debts." On the back of the letter was a photocopy of a telegram from London, saying, in only slightly different words, "The cheque's in the mail. Best regards, Stanley Kubrick."

## THE WRITE STUFF

Novelist and writer Angela Carter has had two of her works transferred to the screen. The film based on her novel *The Magic Toyshop* will shortly be seen in Australia. STEPHANIE BUNBURY talked to her about screenplays, dialogue, adolescence and the supernatural.



CHORE HOLD: Talk Ball to Uncle Philip, Patricia Kerrigan to Aunt Margaret

Clapham has probably always had a bering shop, an electrical store with wire grilles over the windows, and shoddy insurance policies with decorative pictures of household fires posted in front of the windows. These days, Clapham, gruff old Clapham where Nell Dunn broke middle-class fronts in the sitcom to go Up *The Junction*, has a wine bar too. A wine bar, Lord love us. And it's not the Claphams it's Clapham.

Clapham also has Angela Carter, 47, woman of letters, celebrated novelist, feminist, novelist and, more recently, screenwriter on subjects feminist, but she's not going to change in a hurry. Her old house is still a novelist's dream, with bookshelves in the hall and piles of washing on the chairs. The front room is lined with enough toys to dress the set of *The Magic Toyshop*, her second novel back in 1967 and now her second film script (the first was *A Company of Men*). Good chess proceeds among the men. Her parson has no better copy to the drawers either. Her hair is a defiant silver bank, and her body, which has clearly spent most of its time behind a desk with the books buried, slips comfortably into the upholstery of the couch. She speaks slowly and meaningfully. Come what may, she is accumulating into solidly between middle-age.

London, she says, has changed a good deal. She thinks wistfully of the lean postwar days before youth culture hit town, let alone puppets. *The Magic Toyshop* is set in those years and is full of nostalgia.

"London had a sort of haunted quality," she says. "It was sort of like an Eastern European city, without very much advertising. Nobody was very rich. There were few classical music concerts in public parks, everyone had enough to eat but not too much. . . . It was always rather cold and uncomfortable under Aunty, but it was kind of healthy discomfort somehow."

You wouldn't expect this sort of pessimism, not from this woman, not from this writer whose stock in trade is the bizarre: women with wings, vampires, werewolves, strange couplings, sinister chambers full of flickering candles, women full of surreptitious and repressed. *The Magic Toyshop* is the story of these children who are oppressed suddenly and are sent to live with aunts Uncle Philip, arch-antagonist, his dumb wife Margaret and Margaret's dancing, dithering leech brothers. Philip makes ingenious toys and marionettes and confines the family to his dampen of make-believe. His most dissonant strains are projected on to 13-year old Melanie, who is compelled to act the role of wretched Leda opposite a huge, veiny marionette.

In the book, Philip's creations are drooped in the horror of his character. The film makes this later, three minutes with the help of the supernatural, the vein has its own appetite, pictures move, puppets come to life and run riot, and Melanie's brother Jonathan runs away to see through the painted boards that form the backdrop to the Leda rebellion. It is a magic of the wind-swinging variety, more or less what you might associate with Angela Carter, but not exactly her style. Too fly by ball?

It comes in a surprise how forcefully down to earth she is, in person. She is not, she says flatly, interested in the woods. She did once go to a picnic in Japan, but what interested her about it was that he wanted her against trusting people with black hair, when he himself was Japanese and very black of hair indeed. She likes that sort of misanthropy. Her stories brim with wit but she regards real ones less with fascination than a cool sympathy. "I'm a perennial



(PUPPET MASTER) Uncle Philip and his marionettes

student of human folly," she says, "and, you know, the one thing we can be sure of is that whatever those people had been up to they were not guilty of the crimes of which they'd been convicted, which I think is a salutary thing to remember." There are the facts — she is a realist for fun.

She likes fairy stories too, because they are the fiction handed down by those who left no other trace, the diarists, the historical messes. They are the only historical trophies of people who have vanished. Now the publishers for *The Magic Toyshop* are trying to dub her the magical realist of English letters, and, in her solid way she won't have it. Gabriel Garcia Marquez came out of Catholic South America. She came out of South London and the Welfare State. Different history altogether. Let's get this straight.

The supernatural elements in *The Magic Toyshop*, she says, came largely from the director, David Winkley, who had gotten working connections with South America, as it happens. "He likes doing it," she says, "and I was easy." And something had to crystallize the impact of the story into concrete images. She is humble in the face of the demands of the medium. The story itself was full of holes, which gaped once the novel's language was stripped away. "The holes can't be left empty for the reader to imagine what's going on, because that's not how the cinema works," she says, then adds "It could be how the cinema worked, but it would be cinema of a different kind, operating at a different level. This is a straightforward narrative movie." There were certain pressures from the Granada producers, who insisted everything should be explained.

Working with a group on film is flat, she says. It gets her out of a chair, out of the house, and she meets different people, non-bookish people, like the ones who made the ghoulies werewolves transformations for *The Company of Men* and were, she says with relish, "extremely odd." So she will not do more than murmur sagely and darkly about producer interference, apart from unnamed somebody who are quoted as saying: "They won't stand for this, you know" when anything strange came up in the draft. Her faith, she says flatly, for engaging with capitalism. It's not far for to wings and moon.

The toys of *The Magic Toyshop*, however, certainly come from her. Toys are real enough. The novel before *The Magic Toyshop*, *The Shadow Dance*, was set in a junkshop. "I like shops," she says flatly. "I could have gone into the second-hand business in those days. I spent a lot of time at auctions and swappet things around. I had a passion for markets as one stage, I think it's the tenderness of human beings that I'm interested in. I keep short of being concerned in others." Her three-year-old son Alex, who roams around her like a dolphin throughout the interview, has quite a collection of art toys from mother, but only "the prettier small moral automata." She watches indulgently as he whizzes the wheels of two little cars against each other.

At the centre of *The Magic Toyshop* is Melanie, verging on



BEVERLY HILLS/PHOTO Caroline Monroe as Malena

4. but knowing, almost, but not quite, grown up, and colored with a bit more spark in the film than in the original. Malena in past Carter hair movies are full of girls dressing up, striking out, taking their chances by the horns. The fact that Malena must grapple with puberty in a heretofore of male-believe is a more woman-on-the-road struggle, as the writer remembers it.

"I yearned to grow up," she recalls. "Yearned and yearned. And I thought the adult world would come as some sort of accession of grace.... One day I'd wake up and I'd be like Jeanne Marais in a black dress."

"But many things about the adult world seemed to me profoundly strange. I didn't know what was going on at all.... The whole business for me of growing up was very much tied up with going to work. I was a reporter, and the whole super-casual atmosphere, the little camper uniforms, the peckpoking for position, the business about hy-lexes—I thought I'd left all that behind at primary school. The carefree existence of people—my producers and I certainly one had entered a society consensus where anything could happen."

Uncle Philip is mischievous if anyone is. Greco and bullying in the book, he is less and predatory in the film, an accidental result of casting. Tom Bell in his Philip Flawer guise looks alarmingly like Norman Tolson, Chairman of the Conservative Party. The actor, originally chosen for his "bead eyes," apparently studied Tolson, a close, grand public figure, and has projected a brand of cruelty much more subtle than the sort depicted in the novel; it has become the right, silent cruelty of the future chamber electronic expert. "You his damn rapist," according to Angela Carter, is "not as bad as the real world." This she confirms as if it were merely self-evident.

Among her earlier writings, she says, it was only the

fantasy novels which demonstrated an understanding of the power men had. "The more realistic novels, the novels about people she knew when she was young and extremely unhappy, have much darker sexual politics. They have, too, a "damned hallucinatory quality" she likes. Aside from those plans, she is rather wary about her apprenticeship works.

"I did everything on a wing and a prayer," she says. "You can't use the word 'bad' about them, they're not bad novels because they're not even like novels, they're not even imitations of novels, they're doing something else.... One of the really difficult things about making a script out of *The Magic Toyshop* is when I read it again I realized it didn't have a plot."

"It had a vague beginning and an end but not much middle. And one of the things this particular kind of film needed was a coherent narrative structure, so one had to reassemble the novel as this film." Characters, dialogue, all the workmanlike things of the realist novel were mysteries to her, although she thinks she has improved these days, partly under the regimen of film and radio drama's formal demands.

"I used to be hapless at dialogue, I could never write a conversation. This is partly because I could never understand why people filled up pages of novels with 'Have a cup of tea... some sugar? ... You thank you'—and expected me to pay money for that!" She chuckles. Angela Carter laughs vigorously and often, especially at her own shortcomings. The dialogue in this film, as it happens, is very much like that in the book and it seems to stand up quite well to being spoken.

She laughs, too, at her own inconsistencies. She tests easy with them. I might find it puzzling that the writer who delights in pointing out the underbelly of sexuality, understanding decent expectations, is disturbed that the central character in *The Company Of Wolves* is only 14 and that there were friends of her, the belletrists, in the film. But she does not. Literature in different. Her fictional characters seek romance, her polemical writings warn that the sentimental career is a descending to sadistic bondage; back in the real world, all she can say about it is that everybody wants someone to love. She writes about witches almost calmly because she regards sorcery so sceptically. Her most recent novel, *Nights At The Circus*, featured an anarcho-syndicalist witch, Lizzie. The witch is the subversive of a job: when Angela Carter, on her business trip, asked a friend why he thought there were many bookshops with names like *doctoresque* which made left-wing notions lie down with the profit, which could be guaranteed to work the Communist Manifesto and the Tarns Pack, he suggested it was because everyone knew that neither worked. She liked the idea, hence Lizzie.

But in the novel Lizzie's rascality and subterfuge are both successful. Of course. Sounds to mean "Flirtatious isn't about life, you know," Angela Carter sagaciously. Of course, I should have known. Sounds to mean: "It's about what we hope for from life. Not about what we are, but what we might be. And we might be, I like to think. I get more cheerful as I get older, though I don't think why?"

She smiles benignly out at the gray sky over Cheltenham. Alex walks up and down with a walking stick on his head. A builder is looking at the bathroom which had been opened in under the stairs. We are a long way from *The Magic Toyshop*.





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- Vincent
- The Witches Of Eastwick

## ● THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK

Last one scary night in a little town called Eastwick three wondrously beautiful women meet over a pitcher of martinis to bemoan the shortage of eligible bachelors within miles.

Alex (Cher) is a leggy,raven-haired widow with one child and a cottage business in only-poly clay figurines. Jane (Susan Sarandon), the tanned, childless divorcee, is music instructor at the local primary school. And Saks (Michelle Pfeiffer) is a sensitive but under-eyed abandoned mother of six and reporter for the local rag.

"He should be handsome." "But not too handsome." "But eyes, he's got to have great eyes." "Intelligent." "And sensitive." Feature by feature feature they dream up the perfect man until Jane, in the amusement of her own ruse, concludes that he should ride into town on a big black steed. Out to capture and the driving rain as a big black

Mustang barrels through the gates of Eastwick.

*The Witches Of Eastwick* is a thoroughly entertaining movie. With Jack Nicholson in the lead role as the devil himself, fine performances by the three witches, and a stellar job by Vanessa Cartwright in the supporting role as Eastwick's local "sensitive" and pride, there's plenty of professionalism.

Maybe a bit too much. Everyone can agree with the film is a Hollywood hero. The director of photography, Vilmos Zsigmond, was an Oscar for *Glue Smearers*, the composer, John Williams, composed the music for, among other things, *Star Wars*, *Splash*, and *E.T.*; the production designer, Polly Platt, is the ex-wife of Peter Bogdanovich, with whom she made *The Last Picture Show*. And the director is Australia's own George Miller of *Mad Max* fame. There're no flies on this film.

*The Witches Of Eastwick*, based on the novel by John Updike, is according to its producers, "a supernatural thriller on its



JACK NICHOLSON: Liberator

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the 1980s that is also a comic battle of the sexes." If there is anything to object to it is probably that last bit. A fair few minutes of the film are devoted to the kind of righties relationship talk that makes you shirk around in your seat. But just when you think it may be time for popcorn snarling puts a pin in the balloon.

Daryl Van Horne (Nicholson) is a meddling fat, meddling bald, exceedingly rich eccentric. He picks up to Eastwick (was he summoned?), buys the local heritage home, installs his seven foot valet, and sets to work making the three women's dream come true. To each of them he is just what the doctor ordered: a good dick, a nice guy, a libertine and a tempter.

At least that's what the devil is supposed to be. But in a fabulously comic scene with Cher in which Nicholson leads her on a tour to the master bedroom, every convention of the seduction scene is blown wide open. Cher's no dummy, Frank's her middle name. Jack Nicholson no longer looks like anybody's idea of a laugh-in shining armor, and Cher doesn't care if she tells him so.

But if there's no getting around the fact that Jack Nicholson no longer looks like anybody's hero, there's also no getting around the fact that she's exactly what he sells in his performance as, no always, fantasist. His mood shifts, the range of expression, the turning — he is exuberantly carry and increasing by turns. You'd almost think that the movie was a paean to his skill and accomplishments as an actor.

Not that this is the best thing he's ever done. But there are echoes of all the other Nicholson we have known and loved, no least of them the totally dispossessed "Here's Johnny" of *The Shining*. In fact, there are lots of echoes in this film. Like the best of the contemporary Hollywood's productions, *The Wicker Of Eastwick* is meta-film. It's even been suggested that certain tragic scenes are more than a little reminiscent of *Mary Poppins*.

It came as no surprise to find that the producers of *The Wicker Of Eastwick* were responsible for the comic horror movie, *An American Werewolf In London*. That's the genre we're dealing with. But this is a much glossier film, a much more self-conscious, a much slicker film than its predecessor. Take Jack Nicholson's workaholic, to begin with. As he fits a man of wealth and taste, he sports not only a pony tail with what's left of his hair, but a suit of straw-berry baggies.

It's a lavish production and no mistake. Not a penny spared in, to



JACK NICHOLSON: Temptation

begin with, the search for the right location. Polly Platt and the location manager, we are informed, logged over 34,000 miles throughout the north-eastern US and northern California (ask me why) in their search for the perfect New England village. At length they found the ideal spot: Cohasset, Massachusetts, right next door to Platt's hometown. Why they ever looked farther than their own backyard is a mystery only Hollywood can solve.

But you get all the pay-offs of the big expense. It wouldn't do to underplay the devil's powers and some of the effects are first-rate. If there are some lavishly unnecessary ones (a final *Alfred*-like corroboration scene less than essential) it's only in keeping with the generally luxurious mood of the film.

If there's anything to matter about it might be the broad politics of *The Wicker Of Eastwick*. You could say, for instance, that we hardly need another demonstration of the irresistibility of unadorned masculine domination. Or that Cher, Susan Sarandon, and Michelle Pfeiffer, at least two of whom are proven and formidable talents, are reduced in this film to legs and belly hair. That there is not much scope for anything more than the restoration of the most conventional and oppressive sexual relationships. Even that the jobs the movie takes at the pantomime of the average New Englander are predictably clichéd.

The answer to these charges is presumably to be found in the reversal of fortune conclusion which makes a gesture toward self-determination and lifting of the patriarchal yoke. Sort of.

Actually, this kind of analysis, though theoretically applicable to anything and

everything, seems essentially out of place when it comes to *The Wicker Of Eastwick*. In a world in which there are three kinds of movies the Dreadful, the Innocent, and the Fun, there is no mystery as to which category this one falls into. It hardly takes itself seriously. I don't see why we should do any differently. And, really, you could do a hell of a lot worse with a rummy after noon.

Christian Thompson

**THE WICKER OF EASTWICK** Directed by George Aiken. Producers Neil Gaiman, Peter Gutter, Jon Peters. Executive Producers Russ Cohen, Glen Carter. Screenplay: Michael G. Cooney. Director of Photography: Simon Duggan. Editors: Richard Fendler/Blake. Music: C. De La Guardia. Music: John Williams. Production Design: Pola Pell. Cost. Jack Harrison. Story: Van Horne. Cher: Horowitz. Michael: Susan Sarandon. Jane: Sarandon. Isabelle: Pfeiffer. (Sally: Margaret. Screenplay: George Aiken. Screenplay: Robert Jensen. (Clio: Albert. (Pete: Jason's (Pete: Neil. Cost: Stephen (Pete). Production Company: Tiger-Peter. Colormate: Village. Distributor: Village Roadshow. Screen: 118 minutes. USA, 1987.

## • RAISING ARIZONA

*Raising Arizona* might have been made decades ago if Elmore Arbus had been asked to direct the Road Runner cartoon. Whether consciously or not, Edson Goss (the producer) and Joel Coen (the director) owe plenty to both Arbus's satiric view of the ordinary, and the Road Runner's ability to seem blithely across the surface of the Western film. This analogy is only one of a series of unlikely comparisons and parallels of cinematic modes which *Raising Arizona* employs in telling its story of neo-con Hil ("Ed") McDermough, his wife, neo-policewoman Edwina ("Ed"), and their calamitous 3

◀ attempt to complete the family unit with a "little sister" (baby).

In an extended prologue, which uses a highly skilled condensation of narrative conventions, we witness Hi's sorry track record in "romanticized behaviour" — he casually robs "convenience stores" (the American equivalent of our 7-11s) with an abandoned gun and a broken getaway car. Each time he is caught he woees policewoman Ed (Holly Hunter) in the 15 seconds or so it takes for her to snap his mug shot. He goes to prison, gets paroled, and then the cycle starts over. The fourth time around, Hi (Nicolas Cage) decides to "go straight." He marries Ed and they move to a small house in the middle of a garage where they spend their "usual days" — Hi works at a factory drilling holes into small bits of metal, Ed gives up work and starts wearing jeans. The only thing missing is the child which will turn their happy union into a family. But Ed discovers that she is infertile, and they

can't adopt because of Hi's record. Their world, based upon minor separations to normality, begins to fall apart. That's when they hear of the Arizona quadruplets — five babies born to Northern Arizonas, owners of a chain of upstart furniture stores. They get a worrying idea. The takes appear, the film begins.

By this time we have become familiar with the style which the Coens are employing. A succession of stylized, colorized close images, often shot in wide angle, emphasize the bizarre or wacky (a term the Coen brothers use), such as Hi and Ed on vinyl banana loungers watching the sun set across an empty horizon. Naturalism flies out the window, replaced by a kind of hyper-realism within a self-conscious sphere of improbability where almost anything is possible. For example, Hi would have spent a maximum of four years in prison between the first shot and his first parole (all within the first 10

minutes) but not only does he appear the same age, he wears the same clothes! Humour is often situated between the ironic humility of Hi's point of view — he wants to be a good, honest man but struggles against both his weak nature and the call of the convenience store — and the hyper-real exaggerations of normal social behaviour. Ed's version of a holiday to the baby she and Hi have kidnapped is a failed shot at a man embarrassed to hang.

The style constantly refers back to children's cartoons where bright colours and naive, literal logic mix it with violence and explicit sadism. It is a world where wackiness reigns, and the character competes with the visual gag for attention. Accordingly there is little attempt to make "real" characters. Nicotina of the "real" are tossed playfully into the air. Everyone is essentially caricatured, as flat and as bright as the abundance of visual transitions surrounding them. Children's cartoons, however, have the good sense to last for no more than a few minutes, and this is where *Being Armons* starts getting into trouble.

The film is operating in terms which are, at their core, alienating. We are constantly being held at a distance. For instance, we are distanced from the characters by their lack of credibility. Our modes of relation to a film "character" rely upon a sophisticated exchange of anatomy from our (audience's) point of view for credibility from theirs. If a character extends beyond an acceptable logical boundary, it begins to move into the realm of caricature. It becomes increasingly difficult to locate ourselves within their world. Instead, we observe them, more critically, from the outside.

The general tone of *Being Armons* is ironic detachment. Often the focus of the humour comes from a play with sincerity. The style emphasizes self-consciousness — the careful placement of objects and colours — and authorial presence. Given that its primary aim is the way it satirizes the western, *Being Armons* subverts charm for more familiar audience relations. This succeeds to a point. There would be few scenes in the contemporary cinema as charming and full of pure delight as the one where Hi first tries to kidnap one of the five Arizona babies. But there is always the threat of that charm wearing thin and, after half an hour or so, it does. You become conscious in the barrage of highly-crafted, beautifully art directed, self-consciously photographed scenes.

In choosing to use highly-stylized visual exaggeration, the Coens find themselves with a critical distance between the film and the audience. Instead of using this to some effect, they spend most of the film trying to counteract the structure which they themselves set up within the first 15 minutes. *Being Armons* seems to undergo a series of shifts in mode, from aberrant to



BROTHERS IN SHADOWS: Joel (left) and Ethan Coen



'adventure' to 'thriller' and ending in ironic sentimentality from *Fast Forward* to *The Widow* via *Remo*.

The last shift occurs when the plot starts to take over. Ed and his sister Nathan Aronson Jr. Cole and Evele (John Goodman and Bill Fagerday), two prison escapees and friends of Hi, land on their doorstep. Hi dreams the Lone Rider of the Apocalypse into existence — a frightening beauty hunter (Tex Cobb) from the Mad Max desert, who eventually comes after young Nathan Jr for the reward Nathan is offered. Hi loses his job after slugging his boss for suggesting wife-swapping and, as despair, tries to rob a convenience store. Evele and Cole kidnap Nathan Jr for the beauty but lose him, regrettably, while robbing a bank. The Lone Rider turns up, as do the enraged Ed and Hi. All of this plot action tends to rub over rather than repair the character problem. The arbitrariness and darkness of these events and turns pull and, after being completely absorbed at the start, I found myself growing weary as the film wore on.

*Who Fears*, which bears comparison (mainly due to its ironic detachment from the 'ordinary') bridges the distance through the use of threat and an overwhelming undercurrent of sexuality and violence. *Raising Arizona* attempts a similar shift, but the transition is far more problematic. Threat is undermined by everyone's cartoon-like invulnerability — eg shots are fired but no one ever gets hit, and while *Who Fears* was able to shift into a thriller mode without an interruption to its stylistic flow, *Raising Arizona* jumps, like a car out of tune, from gear to gear.

A more fundamental bridge is needed between audience and character. Obviously, Hi is meant to fulfil that role. His monologues are representations of an internal person, a 'real' character, through whom we, the audience, can enter the narrative. This only partially works. Although he is warm and lovable, his singular presence as a 'character' (rather than 'characters' in this formulation) only serves to further heighten one's sense of isolation. Hi, the 'character', is excluded from the narrative. His introspection is always conveyed directly to the audience. When he acts within the film, he acts as 'caricature'.

Without being able to assert a stronger emotional value for its characters, the ending, where Hi dreams of himself and Ed with their own huge family of children and grandchildren at Thanksgiving, is quite peculiar. You can admire the way it undercuts itself, the obvious manipulation of conventional codes of sentimentalism for humour, but there is also something missing. Perhaps an underlying affection for these 'wacky' cartoon characters from both the filmmakers and the audience, versus against this impenetrable, ironic darkness.

There are many possible readings of

*Raising Arizona*. I have discussed an operational difficulty, or "why I lost interest in spite of being bowled over by the first half", without tackling other possibilities, such as the issue of 'The Family' or the recurring motif of birth, fertility/fertility and the desert. I chose this tack because ultimately I think that the Coen brothers, like all great writers of postmodern temperament, were aware of leading in some glumpan in pursuit of something more spectacular.

*Temp Agent*

RAISING ARIZONA. Directed by Joel Coen. Producer Ethan Coen. Screenplay: Brian and Joel Coen. Co-producer Mark Goodson. Executive producer James Jacobs. Associate producer: Deborah Hirsch. Director of photography: Barry Sonnenfeld. Editor: Michael R. Miller. Production designer: Jane Minks. Music: Carter Burwell. Cost: Nicolas Cage (w/ Holly Hunter (alt.)) They travel (Nathan Aronson Jr.) John Goodman (Cole) Biller Fagerday (Evele) Ron Montgomery (Ed) Frances McDormand (Eve) Daniel J. J. Coyle (Lone Rider) T.J. Kohn (John) L. Lynn (Duke) Ken Potemkin (Arson) Producer company: Ted and Jen Productions. Distributors: Fox Columbia. Screen: 35 mm. USA: 1991.

## • LONG BOW TRILOGY

In *Long Bow Trilogy*, Carma Hinton and Richard Gordon break down the barriers of stereotypes, suspicion and political distance that have foiled the efforts of many a foreign documentary-maker in China. Considering that the latest official policy is religious tolerance, for example, it's not easy to capture on film the sight of a padre flipping his arms like angel wings as he cracks Catholic vows on heaven. Nor is it a simple matter to get factory workers to discuss, as the record, details of a walk-out protest in a country which claims to have eliminated exploitation — and outlawed industrial strikes. The directors' sympathetic camera even drives an embarrassed numbness from one old woman against her husband, who, she says, has "never treated me like a human being".

*Long Bow* is the village in north China which William Hinton, Carma Hinton's father, immortalised in the ▶



SPICE IN SUNDAYS: Scenes from *Longbow Trilogy*



Before relationships stabilize and the emotional cycle is complete. We are convinced, however, that the trio will eventually find their own happy equilibrium. The change is natural, and inevitable. The transformation of Kibbe — for which the couples are, equally, equally good and great — is another matter *squarely*.

It would be embarrassingly easy to recognize an Australian feature film if they tended to be raw, and awkward, with the characters generally balanced precariously between dicks and nannies. This, happily, is no longer the case. Our films now distinguish themselves more by their understatement. The humour and the drama are rather low-key, the colours rich and muted. The productions have coherence and assurance, but thankfully without Hollywood's gloss and bravado.

The comedy, when it peeps out, is delightful. The drama runs considerably on solid scripting and characterization, and evocative music-crowns. Fodor like *Shu* and *Makoto* enrolled in these areas, and they are some of the charms of *The Floor Is The Last*.

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## ■ HIGH TIDE

Cinema has no shortage of trannies, but "One director, one story" is among the more solid of them.

Gillian Armstrong's story, to which she returns in every film, is that of women faced with a crucial career choice. As she covers a range of unattractive alternatives, various trivial men and odd women get the lion's share of attention. But in the end the objects all of them, electing to go on without her independence.

Elements of this theme are apparent even in Armstrong's appetitive works, particularly *The Singer* and *The Dance* (through the girl, to the chagrin of most audiences, loses her nerve at the last moment). And it's sexually transposed in *Sister Night* where the central character is a man "coming out" at his first gay dance. In *Bandied A Day*, still one of Armstrong's most moving early films (and her favourite), the percol theme is to the core. Men don't appear, only their handwork: the Sennar the girl shows, and the pounding shoe factory in which she must turn out her "bandied a day" or lose her job. "I had a baby, now it's gone," she moans, and the camera rolls away with a gasp of

identical terraces. Security can be brought, but only with blood and pain.

At the close of the Armstrong story is the preoccupation of all her work — the point that women must pay. All Armstrong's heroines share a vision of themselves as property, a social and social commodity to be bartered for what they want and need. Sybilla Moberly, Jackie Mallens and Kate Saffell are traded by men on an emotional stock exchange which assumes and values them as objects. Sybilla is a paid tutor to the Mellons and a prospective wife, Jackie, as a prize bet on the non-succumb of the rock baroness, Kate Saffell as a prop to her husband's career. None of them takes issue with that fact of life. What they want and finally sense is the right to sell themselves and keep the profits.

Amusing almost to watch the lesser-known singer in *High Tide*, Laila (Dusty Davis) underestimates aspects of all three Armstrong brothers — the troubadour of *My Darling Clementine*, the rock singer of *Street*, the master of *Mr. Tambourine Man*. She's a back-up singer in Lester (Frankie Hadden), an Elvis clone who tours the world daily. An end-of-season appearance as a teenage sweet coincides with one of Laila's few mistakes, and when Lester pulls out she's left behind, literally on the beach.

Stranded with a busted car and no money to pay the repair bills, Lali hooks out in a cavernous park on the windy point above the ocean. Ally (Chastin Keaven), a young girl who lives in the park, recognizes her, but it's not until she sees the girl's grandmother Ben (Jan Adelaide) and recognizes her mother-in-law that she realizes Ally is her daughter, abandoned years before after her earlier husband's rejection was deadly.

So far, it's all well. This is Elly's chance — of the sort one hoped the Austereins might have discarded along with domesticity, religion, and the plot has almost ritual predictability. Lila will surprise her mother by revealing herself, begin with a mother-in-law who still carries the memory of her son, and finally face the choice to leave Ally in ignorance or accept the calculations and the responsibility — of middle-aged motherhood. One remained irreverently of the old TV series *Love*, where Marty Miller and George Mahan based on town every week in their convertible, struck a personality problem down before they'd parked, and roared away next morning to the west and some of those they had previously consorted.

Laura Jones wrote this story originally as a vehicle for a man he, ironically, Armstrong reversed the sex. The transportation has its awkward moments. Lili's affair with lover Colin Firth is perfunctory, largely a series of doleful reaction shots and a final (though, for the plot, crucial) meeting with Ally. Ally's preoccupation with finding his ally in the story, too prominent to be a flaw, too brief for a theme (a difficulty due in part, says Armstrong, to

problems in finding a convincing story double). Her's proven life also intrudes into what should be, almost to the confusion of all else, the love story of Lulu and Alky. But Lulu, spying with secret fascination on her daughter as she shows her legs, another and daughter meeting on the beach like lovers, needs shared in the hamburger bar where the nearby presence of adolescent boys is almost a physical threat — these scenes show the physical of *Off to It* at its best.

They contend with others where Davis and Armstrong illustrate the role of women as property. Short of the money to replace her car, Lili contemplates hacking the young mechanics, a scene played to the very lip of embarrassment but redeemed by her belated and self-deprecating acknowledgment of just how naive it is to discard one's principles. She comes then into a strip-tease performed for the members of the local club to earn the repair money. In the least sensual strip of recent years, the ladies (except the camera, peering off her costume as if a devil on her back) The men are buying nothing but control.

Gunn, pulled, dishevelled, July Evens is convincing as a piece of debris from the wreck of the atom. But it's Karren as Billy who truly dominates the film. Accomplished in the war of emotions, she probes her feelings as if they're mines, containing a bomb that would not be exploded in an Eric Rohmer film. It's an impressive debut.

Gillies' programming is the most original director working in Australia today, and while *High Tide* is not the major work we had the right to expect after *After Septis*, it shows her once more her skills with understated wit. But why does a director skilled with assurance of classroom control herself work a show-waddy-waddy singer in a tinsel wig for whom the prime of wisdom is Bob Dylan's lyrics for "Dark Eyes"? How long before a writer adapts those classical models of the Western Aesop — Aesop, Aeneas, Iphigenia — to a director uniquely qualified to film show?

**Abstract**

**HIGH TIDE** Directed by Brian Koppelman. Producer: Sandra Levy. Screenplay: Lynn Jones. Director's commentary. Russell Mael, Jason Paul, Paul Brannan. Music: Garfield. Mark Whitham. Rating: PG-13. Product not designed. Kelly Campbell. Cast: Jude Law (Liz), Jon Allen (Sam), Charles Keenan (Ally), Cam Fries (Mick), John Clayton (Cag), Wayne Tugage (Therapy), Paulen J. Holden (Liam). Production company: M.L. Productions. Distributor: Miramax. 95min. 100 minutes. August, 1997.

## ■ VINCENT

More than any other artist, Vincent van Gogh is the archetypal expatriate. His tragic life and eventual suicide have established him as the very model of the tormented artist working at the fringes of society. It therefore comes as no surprise that Paul Cox should choose to make a documentary on the artist, given Cox's apparent reverence for

«(artistic) suffering and high-art values. Even the emphasis on van Gogh's death in the tale is a sure sign that suffering and death are key issues here. It's the old cliché that to be truly creative (and ultimately to possess «genius») one must go beyond the limitations of bourgeois society to the very limits of existence. Only in that way can one's art be «authentic».

Given this scenario, it is surprising that Cox has taken such a passive method to tell the story. He has used narration rather than the rest of the letters that van Gogh wrote to his brother Theo, who supported the artist throughout his life. One gets the feeling that this method was chosen to allow the artist to «speak for himself» without the external intervention of the filmmaker. Such apparent objectivity comes as a welcome change from Cox, who might have bargained to with the ideal of overblown hysteria he gave us in *My First Wife*. Instead, we are presented with images of Dutch and French landscapes as English actor John Hurt reads van Gogh's letters describing his surroundings. This much of the film could be mistaken for a fairly bland documentary, were it not for flashes of Cox's by now familiar Super 8 footage — here mainly as fleeting images of the flowers

that fascinated van Gogh in his later life.

This characterizes the early parts of the film. Then a curious thing happens as the letters come to display van Gogh's social and political environment, rather than just his physical surroundings. We are shown reconstructions of various scenes, from a tedious sunset of «The Potato Eaters» to a French bar setting, all shot from van Gogh's subjective point of view. (How Cox really puts himself into van Gogh's shoes as the camera becomes the artist — darting this way and that, looking through windows, approaching prostitutes...) To my mind, these scenes fit uncomfortably with the rest of the film, and one wonders why Cox felt these necessary. It's as though he felt that the film lacked the drama needed to sustain it, or was merely too dry. Indeed, they seem of had 1980s dramas for the teeny madman's-eye-view found in every Jack the Ripper drama), especially the fishermen's wedding of van Gogh's suicide where the camera flies up towards the sky and then waggles off up a country lane.

Flashes might have been saved by the strength of the letters that appear clearly before the extreme difficulty with which van Gogh experienced the world. It is frustrating that (presumably because the letters did not describe

them) several key images of van Gogh's life are left unmentioned. Besides van Gogh spent much of his time photographing about the world, we are not given much material about his personal affairs, particularly his friendships with Gauguin and Pissarro. This suggests that the viewer should know something of the details of van Gogh's life before seeing the film — and yet in that case, the film is probably not interesting enough to recommend. Cox's visual sense is not sufficiently developed adequately to complement the strength of the letters. Thus we see rather unappearing shots of the French countryside at Arles, and indeed the paintings themselves Cox could not resist the show again up to van Gogh's eyes (ah yes, the eye of the artist) in the many self portraits.

The overall impression I have is that Cox lacked the good ideas to make the project really worthwhile. While the film may serve as a fair introduction to the artist and his work, the *Mindstorm* of his association makes it an unsatisfying experience.

Richard Brown

**VANDIM — THE LIFE AND DEATH OF VANDIM (VAN VANDIM)** Directed by Paul Cox. Producers: Italy: L'Espresso; France: IFFI. Screenplay: Paul Cox. Production Designer: James B. Ferguson. Screenplay: Richard Brown. Distributor: Village Video. Screen: 80 minutes. Release: 1987.



MY PUNNY VALENTINE: Two Cheated Friends and Elizabeth Pena.

We suppose that John Carpenter's *Elle* was the first popular music biopic explicitly to link rock stars and death. There's a gold mine in the idea of course. If the genre can be executed deeply and with some success, Buddy Holly has been dead, John Lennon (O.R. 544, New Yorker Videos, The Big Rapper must be next (HILL or SAT has a great idea.) Think of it: Johnny Ace, Sam Cooke, Eddie Cochran, Frankie Lynum — and, for the situation, *The End, Working Men To Love, Good Looking, Ring of Fire, Peter Dinklage, Running To Me, Columbia And Beyond* and *I/I Should Be Thinking* (a small prize for the first correct list of performers to reach us at Cinema Future). *La Bamba* is more than that of course, but death is written all over the righteous face of Lou Diamond Phillips, who plays Ritchie. He is this and that, and even at rest his body seems to twitch. It is hard to imagine anyone physically father removed from Van Valens, who looked out of like a schizoider. The film opens with a dream of two planes crashing into one another, releasing their debris onto a schoolyard of playing children, and the dream is repeated more than once. Ritchie's half-brother Bob (Earl Montgomery) is a little dreamt in black, and all the rock 'n' roll greats Valens meets are dead men today.

For all that, *La Bamba* is not morbid (as *Elle*, for example, is). We suppose that the film's severest project is the virtual attitude of death, which may be one reason that «*La Bamba*», traditionally a song sung at weddings, serves so well as its title. It is the song, rather than the

singer, which focuses and identifies this film.

«*La Bamba*», as you know it is this film or as Ritchie Valens sang it in 1958, is a key event in the formation of American popular culture. Not only is it a dynamic song (the basis of the *Johnny Brothers' Their And Then*, covered by Tom Krow Who in 1963), and Russell Ryan's *The Lonely*, it is a dynamic rock 'n' roll song sung in Spanish. The film pays out of its way to tell us that Valens did not speak Spanish (meaning that the usual rock sources do not mention), and to create «*La Bamba*» deep inside a peculiar mythos which is

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enshrined in a kind of a tangent to the usual rock 'n' roll teenage mythos which also permeates the film (high school, young love, an inevitable way to make music, the business and so on).

Permit us to describe. The film gives Ritchie that somewhat half-brother we already mentioned, a character who is remarkably absent in most accounts of Valens' life (this does not mean that Valens did not have a half-brother, Bob, only that earlier accounts are imagining one kind of love and that *La Bamba* is imagining another). Bob is a small case crowd (for once worth), a wanted (possibly with some dressing ability), and a dream,

### • NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 3: DREAM WARRIORS

Was a back and to it Nancy and her dad, and of course Freddy Krueger, and as the third installment of the series, *The Nightmare on Elm Street* takes something of a turn. The first two screenplays have different roles. Wes Craven, director of the extraordinary original, seems to be back on the scene as author of the story, one of the new screenwriters had to create a prologue, the first child resident of the most haunted house in the street. Nancy Thompson, our blossoming teen, psychics, specializing in dream dissection, John Thompson, her being a plain hearted and nervous son of a cow, and Freddy Krueger is still Freddy Krueger, though even with few changes are in evidence. The director's job goes to movie Chuck Russell, whose screenwriting credits on that wonderful indie movie *Damage* rolls on that he knows a thing or two about what happens when you close that door.

The task of the sequel is to negotiate a relationship between the past and the future — to create a space which, while consistent with the internal elements of

the original, projects them into a completely new set of circumstances. The makers of *Drum Wars* decided to bypass the interesting, if less ambitious and complex first sequel, *Freshly's Revenge*, in which Crockett had no involvement. They directly created a pre-history for *Ellis Street* — a birth for *Freshly* — introduce many new characters, and fully explore the potential inherent in the sequel. All of this makes *A Night on Elm Street* not just one of the best follow-ups as well as a film which stands on its own.

The third film makes more explicit — or, perhaps more accurately, suggests — many of the themes of the first. This strategy opens up greater dramatic and comic possibilities but also risks making the events seem overly calculated. The film reveals the fine line between these two and unconvincingly produces elements of both.

The scenario begins thus: it is some years after the 'unsavory' events of Elm Street and they have been erased from collective memory, when a disturbing trend begins to emerge – strange music: A group of seven teens ("the last kids of Elm Street") who have attempted the tragic solution to their problems are being found at Western Hills Psychiatric Hospital. Research

(Patricia Argente, Rosanna's lover) is the first of them to be introduced. She is heading a paper-mache house which happens to be an exact replica of Nancy's old house, where all the trouble started. When Bruce's mother arrives home from a date she finds that her daughter has (apparently accidentally) slashed her wrists. Kristina is admitted to the hospital, and placed under the care of Dr. Ned Goldwasser (Craig Wasson), a concerned but perpetual pessimist who has an uneasy with the rule not shared by the more strictly deconstructive Dr. Elizabeth Sarna (Patricia Patten).

By Nancy Thompson (Heather Langenkamp) realizes that young Kristen possesses the ability to draw the others into her disease, and is obvious to Nancy (because she's been through it all) that there is a direct link between the youngsters' fear of falling asleep and dreaming and their suicide attempts. Freddy Kruever (Robert Englund) has gone literally insane as a result of his task, with hypnosis and a new experimental dream suppressor drug, to fight him on their disease, on the old home ground she and Freddy share.

As is true, never, *Green Mountain* makes some sort of extremely funny jokes about human existence and the

who neglects and abuses his pregnant girl friend. He also has a close and intense relationship with Richie. And, as a critical juncture in the film, he takes the kid to Tijuana.

In Bob's mind the idea is to get Blanche out, but his aim is deflected when the budding rock star spots a jiveball band playing "La Bamba" and goes to sit in. This is the first time that the song is heard in the film, and the moment is, as you can see, loaded with significance (tradition, sex, immaturity). There is more to come, for Blanche arrives in a hot motorcycle to drive away thieves and her

with angry urgency (such as the real *Blackie Valdez* ever had). It is an act of identity, a statement of, yes, appropriation, a signal of insult and defiance. We think the defiance part is pretty important, because it is too easy to read what is going on here as "assimilation" when that is not it at all. This is assertion, control — not submission, not utter order.

One measures the dimensions of films like this by the ways in which they put conventions. Each filmist tried to make much of some relations: the performers and the sound are regarded with wary skepticism. La Morte is not much concerned with the canon. It makes Michèle's San Francisco Valley neighborhood into his audience, his friends into his fans. The community of the film is modest, local — and possible. And in the end, what might have been a romantic "Walt" vision of a troubadour and his village transmute that in its intimate proximity. This is the most we can expect, the film seems to say: a silent and street-as-two-musicians. It is good, enough.

1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 2449, 2450, 2451, 2452, 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457, 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2465, 2466, 2467, 2468, 2469, 2470, 2471, 2472, 2473, 2474, 2475, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2489, 2490, 2491, 2492, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505, 2506, 2507, 2508, 2509, 2510, 2511, 2512, 2513, 2514, 2515, 2516, 2517, 2518, 2519, 2520, 2521, 2522, 2523, 2524, 2525, 2526, 2527, 2528, 2529, 2530, 2531, 2532, 2533, 2534, 2535, 2536, 2537, 2538, 2539, 2540, 2541, 2542, 2543, 2544, 2545, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2552, 2553, 2554, 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2560, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2568, 2569, 2570, 2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679, 26

[illegible]

MBA

and Bob converses with a wise old man who gives him a talisman which Bob will later use to free Rickie's neck shortly before he dies.

Tom might say that this sequence is the spiritual heart of the film, tracing not Blanche but "La Bamba" back to its roots. For when we hear the song again it has been transformed into rock 'n' roll: it has become "American," while losing nothing of its Mexican heritage. "La Bamba" transforms Blanche too. When she sings it in New York (in a sequence which directly intersects with *American Pie*), she calls it "a nationalistic" and joins the house dance, another it has



NAME: OLIVIA BELL THAYER  
 LAST: Olivia Bell Thayer



Willow as honored hero.

The film's treatment of the story, supposedly anti-war journalist Samuels the Davis (Angelica Huston), with whom Hazzard has a relationship, is downright cynical. She is a token participant in the peace movement and the film primarily requires her to wait in the wings as Hazzard's supportive partner, preferring to not allow their differences to hinder their relationship.

Nothing is allowed to mar the non-polemic portrayal of the military. Differences of opinion and challenges to the order — such as the death of Willow's overcast with Rachel (Mary Stuart Masterson) to be free of the vestiges of military life — are overcome, or rather, side-stepped, by having the character swallow the bait and humbly reduce the consequences.

With a film as propagandist as this, it doesn't help in knowing that it was made with the full cooperation of the US Army, or that Nicholas Proffitt, upon whose novel the screenplay is based, once he wrote the book, "because I didn't like the image of the non-committed officer." Again from the suspicion raised by such claims, in particular are the contrived storylines and implausible characterizations that are used to gloss over a barely-concealed, self-congratulatory hollowism.

Paul Katin

**STUDENTS OF STORY** Directed by Francis Coppola. Producers Michael I. Linn, Francis Coppola. Screenplay: Howard Sams. Based on the novel by Nicholas Proffitt. Director of photography: Jordan Cronwallth. Production designer: Sam Tomkins. Cost. (from left to right): Christine Coppola, Sam Tomkins, Carol (Carol Huston), Angelica Huston, Randolph, David (David Lee), James (Jimmy Krell), D.B. Sweeney, Lindsay Wilson, Gary Brown, (from Thomas) Mary Stuart Masterson (Rachel Ford), Doc (Anthony Quinn), Robert (Robert), Lewis (Lewis), (from Paul) Production company: Coppola (Coppola Fox, Columbia, 20th, 711 minutes, USA, 1997).

## ● EXTREME PREJUDICE

Writer-producer-director Walter Hill is one of the few rare exceptions in his generation of filmmaking peers: he can make great exciting genre movies. His sense of the different genre conventions and variants that form the classic Hollywood cinema is unarmy, he can construct and tell a genre movie with the clearest unflinched economy of a Siegel movie. Hill's iconic reputation as an strong recycling skills are clearly articulated in his latest effort *Extreme Prejudice*. This finely choreographed action thriller embodies a solid grasp of formula filmmaking: it's a movie that knows what it's about, where it's coming from and where it's going.

Hill's characteristic assurance as a genre filmmaker is evident in frame after frame of this carefully paced and designed movie. After the initial appearance of the Cheyenne Ranger lookalike Jack Reardon, a Texas Ranger (performed by the brilliant Nick Nolte) and Sheriff Hank Pearson (Rip Torn), one realizes



IMAGINE THAT SEVENT: Jack Reardon (in hat) with gun a mobility model (in cowboy)

that Hill has clearly combined two distinct genres: the male action thriller and the Western (although the latter appears in a much muted form). *Extreme Prejudice* exhibits certain traces of a particular sub genre of the Western, namely, those movies which present the cowboy in a milieu that is equally breeding treachery and which herald the death of the genre itself. Two movies of that kind are Peckinpah's *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* and David Miller's underdog *Lonesome Joe*. The *Assassination* (Jackie) and he rarely seen without his white hat and his silver six-shooter. Make no mistake about it — Reardon means business. This hero is one conspicuous, aptly, anachronistic cowboy living in a space-age culture drenched by rampant crime. Drug-running and daily violence are the two constants of Reardon's upcoming rural habitat (the Texas-Mexico border). Hill takes care to make a list out of the inoperable abundance of the place. In this regard he has no less right of the importance of landscape in the Western. And what a place it is. Immediately, Raymond Redburn's description of Texas as a "lost, crazy place" comes to mind.

We are often placed in hurry, clutter does not bother marked by the occasional broken-down farm, or right smack in the middle of a smoke-filled tavern full of mutinous juke music where dirt-poor American farmers and Minutemen drink their blues away in a communal bowl of good music and illicit drug money. Whether you are right out in the scrub or back on the main street of Reardon's hometown of Blaney, it doesn't matter — it's all redneck country ready to

explode. Hill delivers the goods on this score in several stunning long shot scenes of explosion, with the frame jam-packed with the mobile debris of the explosion like a Jackson Pollack canvas, or in a manner reminiscent of *Zabriskie Point*, but in a much quicker tempo.

Reardon, who possesses the moral certitude and single-mindedness of Randolph Scott in a Rooster-weaver, is haunted by the uncomfortable truth that his preferred, Sheriff (Mark Concha Alamo), was once the master of the leading drug criminal in the area, Cash Blakey (Power Rowland). To make things more complicated for the Texas Ranger, both he and the psychopath Cash were once childhood friends. Reardon wishes to reform Cash, but it's hopeless. The intensity of antagonism between the protagonist and antagonist has been cleverly modulated. In a *New* interview with Hill nearly a decade ago, the filmmaker talked about how the crime or detective genre relies on the essential conversation of creating antagonistic tension between the main character and the antagonist and how the filmmaker can make the spyware into his or her acceptance. *Extreme Prejudice* is a fine instance of this generic feature.

Hill pays homage to Peckinpah's realistic cinema in many thrilling and atmospheric action scenes. What we can sense in the movie are many important thematic and stylistic connections to the work of Peckinpah and Siegel. All three filmmakers are related in terms of their careers as well as in more fundamental sense of being important figures in genre cinema. Peckinpah worked for Siegel as a scriptwriter (he also had a small role in *2*





what she wants", which is a rather different game. *Angie* Mary is fully conversant to *Dynasty*, but this, as she explains, is because it is "just like the Chinese soap operas — sex, love and money." Uncle Tom (played by the brilliant comic actor Victor Wong) advises American women and American women alike, but increases the loss of the most gorgeous Chinese women traditionally handed down from mother to daughter. And even the most entirely Westernized teenagers can get heavily into a sense of Mah Jong.

Wong, a special interest in the Chinese American community centers on the question of emotions and their expression. "Do Americans have lots of love?" he asks. To his American friend of family life, he refers by Uncle Tom from his romantic childhood, and says, "I hope the New York Times says that of 'people laughing and hugging each other and loving each other'." The Chinese are portrayed by Wong as, by inclination, less open. Mrs. Tan provides the unemotional extreme of an inscrutability suggestive perhaps of deep self-protection. But even so, the film yields its most telling moments from the deep shifts and changes along a sliding scale of emotional expressiveness, such as the scene in which John slowly lets go her wrist near her mother's death.

The Westernized side of Don Smead's is this "human drama" aspect. It is a drama of conflicting cultural and traditional tendencies which resolve and blend into each other in the course of time. *Limbo* says that, that is, in which flowers and people alike grow and die, a culture persistently marked out on a calendar of heavily ritualized growth and small. These rituals constant a "commensurate" world of decisions that must be made by each and every responsible individual and the "casualties" that follow from indecision or bad decision — the terms of endurance of everyday life.

Wang has the genre of "everyday life" worked out to a fault. *Dim Sum* is extremely comprised of details: gossiping and eating food, even being late, browsing books, putting on reading glasses, sweeping out the back porch, hanging clothes on the line, visiting one's neighbor at a regular time each day. This pace of *Dim Sum* has an appropriate musical score featuring a sheng and a microphone which alternates phrases until the final credits when they close in harmony.

The other *Shen Shou* is harder to describe. It doesn't take place in linear time, or in the best of spaces that can be used up in a narrative. It is empty of purposeful action, and barely audible above the sound of a single hand or a distant measure of traffic. It describes a world which can on no account be made tandem with what the characters perceive, feel or think. On the contrary, it is the world which is all around but completely beyond the consciousness of these people whom Wang repeatedly leaves in for the chances of such coincidental meetings.

shot of the film. A world always off  
score, draining away without the  
digital traces. And frequently un-  
noticed too, is all these 'pillow shots' that  
are really a lot more than just epiphoric

Wang Wang reached the border of this world three years earlier in *Sam Sam*, and realized full well the condition of early abandonment: there are notions of an individual consciousness, a "self-identity," which can, through forces of will and reason, master and comprehend all things. Not a cold world by any means — on the contrary, it is full of surprise, laughter and whimsy — but one simply unadorned of wealthy Western customs like clothing, chronology, identity, meaning. I can't give away the ending of *Sam Sam*, but I can suggest that what it relates, like a bird suddenly let loose from the hand to fly, is the restoration of the other world that has been there all along. Gertrude learns that there are no longer any terms to be met, or decisions to be made. And on the content of what first appears as a humanist beauty delivered to the necessary pain of family responsibility, that's a subversive message indeed.

**Abstract**

**ONE SUM — A LITTLE BIT OF HEART** Directed by Wayne Wang. Producers: Tom Bernard, Wayne Wang. Cast: Tony Danza, Deborah Kerr, John Lithgow. Screenplay: Richard Linklater. Music: David Byrne. Based on the play by Taneli Mustala. Screenplay: Wayne Wang. Director of photography: Michael Ballhaug. Cost: \$10,000,000. Rating: R. **ONE SUM** (MCA Home Video, \$14.95) Directed by Wayne Wang. Cast: Tony Danza, Deborah Kerr, John Lithgow. Screenplay: Richard Linklater. Music: David Byrne. Based on the play by Taneli Mustala. Screenplay: Wayne Wang. Director of photography: Michael Ballhaug. Cost: \$10,000,000. Rating: R. **ONE SUM** (MCA Home Video, \$14.95)

## ROUNDING ZERO

One problem in rewriting my film heavily reliant upon 'inspiration' as a strategy in how much of the plot one develops, and therefore, to what degree the impact of the film is compromised in the case of *Ground Zero* holds would be gained by revealing all, although on first viewing there seemed to be some troublesome loose ends, questions left unanswered. Hidden in the plot. Not so.

My second exposure to the film not only confirmed, but amplified the feeling that this is one of the finest Australian commercial features of the century.

First and foremost, *Ground Zero* is an accomplished thriller set in the milieu of conspiracy and intrigue of the Royal Commission into the British nuclear tests carried out in Australia during the 1950s and 60s.

The screenplay, by Marc Gudgson and Jan Sardi, is taut and suspenseful, the production values high, and the direction assertive.

It is a credit to the scriptwriters that the film manages to address so many difficult and often tangential themes, such as the hidden political agendas of 'security' services operating within this country, the European sanitisation of Aboriginal culture and Australia's war

and future books as *Western modernity*, without appearing panicked or resorting to blinding fear liberalism. In fact, the focus of *Ground Zero* seems to be the relationship between 'legitimate' patronage and the individual citizen's abrogation of moral and political power under the guise of 'democracy' as the deceitful 'back room boys', experts in the techniques of manufacturing the status quo.

The new opera uncovers, via a misanthropic RAAP Loughs member, an unashamed social Maudslayiism, one born from the British summer experimentation 30 years earlier. It then cuts to Harvey Denard (played with restraint by Colin Firth) stage a minor scene depicting a Maudslayiism-like, overacting, antique but Tootsie-style hedonist. Instantly we are catapulted from the 'lost' colonial influences of the past to the contemporary 'hard-boiled' film noir. The treatment is here reinforced by a mordant, caustic British officer, Prosper Gifford (Donald Sutherland), when he is confronted by a black American soldier parading a 'Joint Facility' commander (since presumably Nurenger). "Nothing changes, only the uniforms," he warns Harvey.

Deason eventually seeks out Gaffney after he learns that the referee may know something about missing classified footage he murdered father filmed while working as an Army cameraman during the second Iraq. The old man is full of remorse for participating in that nuclear explosion, his complicity in contaminating the blacks with radioactive fallout, and a fundamentalist hatred of them. He is driven by a religious vengeance and guilt, proclaiming that "we'll all burn for what we've done", but manages to help Deason and ward off his foreign parents. This enables Deason to present evidence on the last day of the Commission hearings which he believes will conclusively prove that the British were conspiring to cover up the extent of their radioactive fallout attacks, especially upon the black community.

The degree of sophistication of plot and characterization in *Ground Zero* is apparent even in the most peripheral of characters, ranging from a partially deaf film lab technician to the officious Army film archivist whose public service "blackwatching" is brilliantly realized. Even the minor role of a shopaholic ASKO (Singer Factory), ruthlessly dispatched in one of the film's more overt subliminal to Antonioni's *Life Is* is rendered far more important than his cumulative screen time of less than 30 seconds would suggest.

As the *monocymbioids* lived the *filimacroids* have likewise intelligently interpreted their tool with broader associations. For example, in one context, when depicted as a TV station logo, the shared cultural motif of two adjacent circles underscored by parallel lines connotes transference of information and communication, but where Gaffney recalls the symbol in the context of a

◀ the head of his Aboriginal companion's grave, it implies a complex relationship of connection between worlds along a dreaming track.

Throughout the film there is a constant shadowy backdrop of controversial current affairs, problematically conveyed by the television in Harvey's studio apartment, it depicts MKN hearings, footage of Reagan and Hawke meeting in Washington to reaffirm the ANZUS treaty, and headlines commenting on the Royal Commission hearings. However, the many of the commercial TV station's failure to address the pertinent questions by bowdlerizing to Government TV means would not be lost on public television lobbyist Max Gidgson. In this scenario, having confronted the monocultural influence of the intelligence community, it seems the last thing Harvey will do (unlike Robert Redford's unaffiliated threat to expose at the finale of *3 Days Of The Condor*) is again rely upon the establishment media for vindication and support.

Similarly, the film is full of anti-conventional embellishments, such as the glaring tokenism of ASIO's Aboriginal front counter espionage, or the Persian drinking charms of a senior official (Jack Thompson) who relates to Harvey the difficulty the organization is having in "upgrading its image."

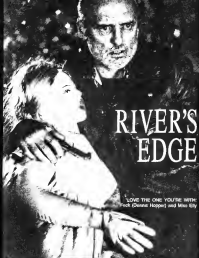
Surprisingly, this very richness of narrative design and counterpoints in no way detracts from the broader implications of doom and corruption permeating the 'high ground' of politics, diplomacy and interests of national security.

Finally, in many ways *Ground Zero* meets a logical synthesis and expansion of two earlier Australian features, *The Last Wave* (1981) and *The Chant of Jimmie Fackre* (1979), in that it blends its Aboriginal mythology (the A-bomb is 'killed' was tribe's dreaming) with the former film's apocalyptic metaphors/prophesy and the latter's depiction of hegemonic forces attempting to cover up nuclear mishaps via murder and subterfuge. Not insignificantly, recognition of the *Mad Max* trilogy is also evident during the explosive collision of Duncan's flaming Holden van with a military jeep, and in Giffney's pseudo-religious cult parings, depicting an Australian Armageddon akin to that related by the child survivors in *Beyond Thunderdome*.

The rich complexity of thematic material and its associations in *Ground Zero* is matched only by the precision of execution and its attention to detail. It also clearly demonstrates that this country has the talent and ability to produce intelligent, commercial cinema of the highest order.

*Mark Breckin*

**GROUND ZERO** Directed by Michael Peterson. (R) 105 mins. (VHS) Michael Peterson. Screenplay: John Smith. Max Gidgson. Director of photography: Steve Gormley. Ed: Ed. David Parsons. Production designer: Ron Norman. Cast: Don Hahn, Harvey Keitel, David Hume, (Producer) John Peterson (1985). Release date: (VHS) Simon & Schuster (1985). Production company: Ground Zero Pty Ltd. Distributor: Eagle Vision. All cinema. Australia: 1987.



## RIVER'S EDGE

LOVE THE ONE YOU'RE WITH:  
Jack (Daniel Hopper) and Max (Glynn

Tim Hunter's *River's Edge* is being rightly recognized with the recent spate of neo-American Gothic (from *Blue Racer*, *Myra*, *Running Arrows*, *Over The Edge*, *Malin*, *And Beyond*, *Eyes Men*, *Red Maple*, *Smoking Wild* — see *Class*). J. Hoberman claims have "the fear of a cultural upsurge". Whatever. These films agree to be contained by the large forms of commercial film narrative of sight, but at most specific levels their concerns keep slipping over, spilling toward *Stranger Than Paradise*, *True Stories*, *Stranger Than Meerk*. They make unusual demands on the filmmaker, who must organize complex shifts of tone and narrative; and, as viewers, who must be particularly attentive to detail, reference, and precisely measured differences from expected models.

How any of these films put made — let alone as easy as it at once — is remarkable. Here's how this one came about.

Four years ago, Neil Janowitz was a student in a screenwriting class at UCLA. He wrote *River's Edge* as an assignment. "He told me he got a C+ for it," Hunter says, "and it went on to win a student prize, which got it circulated among agents." There it bided in a long holding pattern.

Meanwhile, Tim Hunter was in Martha, Texas making *Splinter*, a National Film-type feature story which was fun to make and went nowhere.

Hunter is an unusual fringe figure in the American cinema. I met him when he was among the first-year's intake at the American Film Institute's Summer training course (filmmakers included Paul Schrader, Terry Matich, Tom Robinson, Caleb Deschanel, Jeremy Paul Kagan). The son of a disabled screenwriter (see Hunter, Tim had already made shorts and a feature, *Expected's Daughter*, on American public TV; he had also become a film critic and film historian.

After that, he put his head down and sloped, pushing original projects, script doctoring, publishing a mystery novel. He wrote Jonathan Kaplan's *Over The Edge* (1984), a story of alienated kids in a dying housing estate, signaling his special interest in youth film. He adapted and directed the first of the S.E. Hunter books to hit the screen, *Tar* (1985), which was promptly cancelled by Coppola's *Hombre*, *Double Fish* and *The Outside*. A bit of work on *Warden's* *Moment* awaited later, *Splinter*.

Hunter's roots are in MacDougal and Melville, in the MacDougal cinema and of American cinema (Lang, Winchell, Preminger, Walsh, Feller, Deane — who also made a film called *The River's Edge* — Skit, Hawks, Hitchcock, Ford, Tennessee, Curran), and the French cinema. Hunter through to New Wave. He's an expert on hard-boiled novels (currently working with James Crumley



Whether they get caught or not isn't a matter for concern. The big worry is who gets Blanche and how the other brother deals with it. With her perfect past and a deft little manipulative touch, she crushes the marriage bond between two men who only had each other. Isn't that just like a woman?

Every turn of the plot runs true to course: the switching alliances, the tension of isolation, the adrenalin of the open road, a tale of basically sweet boys who insistively treat the law the way lawfare has treated them, and find themselves on a one-way highway straight to hell.

Along the predictable road of events are various logical and unconvincing turns, including Wynn's perfect shooting of a cop, a momentary dependence on convincing terror and around which the whole plot turns.

Don McLennan's script is often laboured and occasionally banal, destined to patchy delivery and providing little complexity for the actors to sink their teeth into.

Despite all this, *Sleaz, Wym & Me* is curiously enjoyable, moved by some hard to define, low-key, random self-mockery.

After the death of the *Beatniks*, we all feel the joy of the law, mass machine riding the dust with a confidence that infuses its passengers in the back seat. Wynn plays his guitar and rambles to Chuck Berry on the radio singing 'No Particular Place To Go'.

There are other moments of almost universal humour, but they work to diffuse the monotony and cliché.

So too does the energetic on-the-road music and David Cornell's immediate photography of the bus.

Unfortunately, Don McLennan's direction, like the protagonists and Chuck Berry, has no particular place to go. It is not really anybody's story, although the title (revisited from George Savage's novel on which the film is based) suggests it belongs to Blanche.

The ironic softness of Wynn and his tale contravenes to the 'Assurance' of the film and is the key to its partial success. The boys don't blow their way through life and the final scene does not show them being blown into any hole; pervers just as we really get to like them.

But it's not enough. There's too much of chance in this picture but not much grace. Soak, as Sleaz, definitely gives the film most of its edge but his performance is on full rev in a film that takes the slow lane.

*Jonathan Murray-Smith*

**SLATE: WYM & ME** Directed by Don McLennan. Producer: John Burt Foster. Executive producers: Antony Thomas and William Finkler. Screenplay: Don McLennan. Director of photography: David Cornell. Editor: Peter Finkler. Art director: Peter Macdonald. Music: Trevor Lucas and Les Martin. Cast: Nigel Taverne (Blanche Blauvelt), Simon Burke (Walt Martin Santa Sals), Torrie Lewis (Morgan), Lesley Davis (Mollie), Harold Macmillan (Blanche Brown), Christopher Marlowe (Morgan), Tony Martin (Morgan), Peter Macdonald (Morgan), Tony Martin (Morgan). Production company: Utopia Film, Ltd. For the regional film management/limited distributor: Pippas. Screen 81 minutes. Australia, 1987.

## • FROM THE HIP

The teen movie is a surprisingly expansive and fertile genre. The films that have evolved from this field — notably those of writer and director John Hughes (*The Breakfast Club*, *Poly By Post*, *Some Kind Of Wonderful*) — have treated a variety of themes and situations in ways that are relevant, entertaining, and popular with the youth market.

*From The Hip* follows in this tradition and deals exclusively with the pupal dilemma of idealism versus ambition. Robin Weathers (Jacki Nelson) and JoAnn (Elizabeth Perkins) represent these two poles, his barely controlled ambition contrasted with her artistic and spiritual idealism. Their relationship is a solid one, however, the conflict is between Robin's conscience and the situation that his manipulative personality places him in.

Of course, Robin and JoAnn live in a fabulous apartment — it wouldn't be the kind of movie if they didn't — and they have a close circle of warm, wacky and wonderful friends. The trademarks of this type of film are its witty, idiosyncratic, flourishing but obscure young stars and the wonderful interiors of their homes (eg *Almost Last Night*). In contrast the adults — and there are more of them in *From The Hip* than in the Hughes films — are of the cardboard stereotypical variety. Even John Hurt, who plays a man on trial for murder, is not exempt from this rule.

*From The Hip* exaggerates the glorification of youth. Robin, a first year law graduate, has no time for the slow statements of the legal system and the time that promotion in an established legal firm would take, so he sets "creatively" to further his career and make his "natural talent" available to the world. This is a film about the journey to adulthood with all the baggage associated with that journey — loss of innocence and increasing cynicism. The irony of *From The Hip* is that Robin will eventually become one of these stereotypical old fogies and echo the message of S.E. Hinton's *The Outsider*: "When you are young you are golden".

*From The Hip* does differ from other youth-oriented films in some respects. The characters are exclusively upper middle class professionals, whereas Hughes always uses an ensemble cast from a cross section of the community, often concentrating on the working class kids who are still at school. His films deal with the search for identity, rather than professional ethics and the loss of innocence.

Director Rob Clark's previous credits include an entirely different kind of youth market film in *Pretty & Pretty's 2*, as well as *Telstar*, with Jack Lumsden and Robby Brown, the all-star *Monday By Design* and *Remember*, starring Dolly Parton and Sly Stallone. Clark has proved himself a flexible director with a variety of interests. But *From The Hip*

does not have the lightness of touch of the other films in its type. It raises sophisticated moral questions within a framework which is half courtroom drama, half love story, yet at the same time it lingers on a inability to deal fairly with complex adult characters.

*Trevor Rogers*

**FROM THE HIP** Directed by Rob Clark. Produced by Peter Gagliardi and John Burt Foster. Screenplay: David Kelley and Rob Clark. Director of photography: David Spry. Editor: Sam Cole. Producer: Lesley Davis. Music by Peter Gagliardi. Cast: Jacki Nelson (Robin Weathers), Elizabeth Perkins (JoAnn), Tony Martin (Morgan), Lesley Davis (Mollie), Harold Macmillan (Blanche Brown), Christopher Marlowe (Morgan), Tony Martin (Morgan), Peter Macdonald (Morgan), Tony Martin (Morgan). Production company: Utopia Film. Distributor: Pippas. Screen 111 minutes. USA, 1987.

## • RECENT RELEASES

### A Supplementary Guide

**July:**  
*Anything We Say Goodbye* (Fox Columbia)  
*Painting The Town* (State Film Centre — Melbourne)  
*Democracy* (State Film Centre — Melbourne)  
*Australian Made* (Hayes)  
*Malone* (Village Roadshow)  
*The Roadshow* (Village Roadshow)  
*Persepolis* (Hayes)  
*Chatterbox* (Fox Home Video)  
*House 2* (Village Roadshow)  
*Let's Get Harry* (Fox Columbia)  
*Going Home* (Grosser Union)

**August:**  
*The Believer* (Village Roadshow)  
*Bringing Back Murderers* (UVP)  
*Max Hunter* (Hayes)  
*Three Days Departed* (Village Roadshow)  
*The Whistle Blower* (UVP)  
*Producer* (Fox Columbia)  
*Dear Mr. Cox* (Hayes)  
*Chatterbox* (Hayes)  
*Freddie And The Sonnet* (Rams)  
*Quiet Cool* (Seven Keys)  
*The Man* (Grosser Union)



**SHUT! EGGHEAD!** John Hurt fronts a murder charge



DON'T SHOOT DARLING. Scene from Paulette Goddard's *The Chamber* (1939)

## DON'T SHOOT DARLING! Women's Independent Filmmaking in Australia

Edited by Annette Binko, Barbara Creed & Freda Freberg  
(Greenhouse Publications 1987, ISBN 0 86439 058 4 \$29.95 mp)

One of the most interesting and impressive aspects of *Don't Shoot Darling!* is its lack of nostalgia and mindless celebration. Its tone is serious (even somber at times), clear-eyed and critical. It does recognize achievement where it occurred, but very much in the style of one who has grown to pursue mastery, and one who clearly the pleasures and pains of both the past and the present. (This is not to suggest that the book has just one tone of voice or even a single voice.)

It is, as the editors describe it, not a history of women's independent filmmaking in Australia, but rather a "collection of documentaries and discourse". It consists of a number of sections that range from analyses of government policy towards women's filmmakers, to discussion of various women's initiatives, to personal statements by women involved in film and television, to what is called "critical analysis". These sections embrace a wide variety of styles, standards and personal preoccupations.

But overall, the guiding hand of the editors is very evident. As well as making what are among the best contributions in the book, they supply as introductions to each section, thereby providing an analytical net over the material so follow, connect ideas, pointing to repeated patterns, emphasizing certain aspects, making assumptions. This does not constrain or limit readers, either at performing the necessary task of making together (but not finally unifying) the great range of material in the book whole, without this guiding structure, might fly away in as many different directions that it would lose what I take to be its force and importance, namely to provide the means by which past directions can be assessed and criticized and future directions charted.

The editors mean that their book is not intended to be a library, but a set of documents and discourses. And at first sight, the choice of material is a surprise: it has no original documents, no contemporary material. The only article that is reprinted from another source is Barbara Creed's useful survey of feminist film theory of the 1970s and 1980s, a piece which more than any of the others serves a purely backgrounding function. Otherwise, all the material has been written especially for the book, though

clearly over a long period, due to its understandably lengthy production time. This is entirely justified by its substantial and comprehensive nature. It means that the book is bound to be deeply controversial, and it required courage on the part of these editors, who took it on themselves to give a history of institutions and events that so many were involved in and that were inevitably seen of course later.

At times the producers' analysis does seem almost primarily controversial — for example, Lin Szeang's somewhat eccentric assessment of *Filmmaker*. Her statement that "a sense of separate identity and political autonomy for women filmmakers in the context of *Filmmaker* as a lobby of film institutions is rarely apparent" (p256), seems a little harsh in the light of the extensive coverage given to women's filmmaking over the years. And the low level, as the text is, of feminist criticism in the pages of *Filmmaker* could as well be attributed to the difficulties surrounding adequate public criticism of any area of Australian cinema as to the incoherence of *Filmmaker* and the Sydney Film-makers' Co-operative, as Szeang claims. This point is made in Susan Stewart's article on the media coverage of the Jellicoe Festival session, in which she quotes Margaret Mastro's account of the experience of being squashed between the pressures to defend feminist filmmaking publicly, and the pressure to be honestly critical about it, a position which can lead to doing neither adequately.

The first part of the book, the sections on Women and the State, Feminist Institutions and Training and Affirmative Action provides a rich and detailed set of accounts of the circumstances that led to the emergence of feminist and women's (not to be confused as various authors point out) filmmaking in the early seventies and the various structures and institutions that arose to support it. Though some articles are stronger than others, this part of the book is a welcome contribution to current debates on the film industry, and will serve for a long time as a reference work on those issues which have not before been gathered together so comprehensively.

Annette Binko provides a lucid account of the notion of independence and its relation to the mainstream as it is highlighted in the subsequent articles which consider women's feminist filmmaking as a subgroup of independent film. This follows two companion articles on the Women's Film Fund (WFF). Anne Creed concentrates on the changing ideologies that informed its operation through the 1980s and into the 1990s, and Jane Thornley poses issues about its future. "Is there a purpose for the WFF in the 1990s, or is its mission an anachronism, a legacy from the situation of 1970s government intervention and radical feminism?" (p42). The section as a whole raises for me, although not explicitly, the issue of whether women's feminist filmmaking will continue to be a subgroup of the independent scene (and what of this scene itself) or whether it will recognize a separate relation to the so-called mainstream.

This question is also posed by Madeleine Freeman's article on the Sydney Women's Film Unit as the section on making. Her honest and thought-provoking article makes it clear how very difficult things will be for women — because of marginality if we don't have things like the WFF, because of lack of skills and experience, demand if we do, to continue achievement without "women's money". The terrible question that hangs over all the analysis is, what are the options for women filmmakers in the present (and)? It is to be "Female Power Women", as one film maker is quoted by Freeman as a (p46), or is it to continue the pattern of short films on "women's issues"? How can women's filmmaking emerge and the mainstream without really making it, as women feature directors so far have been forced to do, for the most part. It makes one reflect again on the tragedy of the failure of the low-budget feature program at the Australian Film Commission, which would have allowed several women to make the leap into feature-length projects. On the other hand one can contemplate with joy that three of the most innovative recent Australian films from any source have come out of women's filmmaking — *My Life Without George*, *A Sleep Of Deafness* and *Lambert*.

This brings me to what was for me the most exciting part of the book — the section on "critical analysis". This is a collection of extended pieces of criticism, of varied quality, of some key works of women's filmmaking. The weakest is the one on Gillian Armstrong, but this I believe reflects the comparative lack of interest of Armstrong's oeuvre when viewed alongside works like *In This Life's Body* and *For Love Or Money*.

Most of the pieces in this section, especially those of Freda Fre-

• *Frühling* are beautifully written, combining a sophisticated theoretical treatment with an accessible and pleasurable style. Barbara Creed's appreciation of *My Life With Albert Sorel* and its reception by feminist audiences and her extremely illuminating analysis of the aesthetic and theoretical impulses behind *A Song Of Cygnets* were the notes resonating for me. I also enjoyed Christine Mosser's piece on *Der Letzte Der Klasse*, *My Sister Rose* and *Severus Underbelly* (with Collins Hooten) although I disagreed with much of what she said and with the rather prescriptive view of history and the output through which she views these films. The exciting thing about this volume is that the level of vigorous and engaged intellectual criticism of Australian cinema is almost without precedent, though people have been calling for it for years. This section shows how fruitful it can be when done well.

Periodically, the most interesting sections of the book for me are the so-called Personal Statements. Only those of Collins Carroll, at an advantage because of its length, and Helen Green, who immediately is an opportunity to be both subjective and self-theoretically literary, really grab attention. It is interesting to speculate on all the images, feminine self-theorizations and the like, that might have produced for the most part such comparatively blood personal statements. In fact the statements are not personal, they are merely autobiographical.

The editors and authors of this remarkable book are to be congratulated on their tenacity in getting this well-produced volume published, with (feminist) assistance from the Women's Film Fund. Let's hope it receives the serious discussion it deserves and that productive new discourse for women's film making emerges.

Liz Jacka

## LOVE IS COLDER THAN DEATH — The Life And Times Of Rainer Werner Fassbinder

By Robert Katz and Peter Bering

(Jonathan Cape/Australian Publishing Company, 1987  
ISBN 0 224 012174 5 hbk. \$20.95 pb)

RAINER Werner Fassbinder, according to Robert Katz, was a voracity, moodily, neurotically, characteristically, time-consuming pack-hound who, desperate or because of all this, churned out 40 films between 1969 and 1982. This prodigious output was matched by a massive input of alcohol, nicotine, cocaine and sex which only death, the eternal party-goer, called to a halt. A typically unresponsive character, you might say, but it was all part of the Fassbinder plan: "Grow ugly and work. Then, and only then, be their enemy. . . I want to be only on the verge of Time." And the Fassbinder fascination: "He was ghastly, even repulsive," confesses Iris Harnack, a secretary-cum-actress recalling her torments/visions: "Yet in my he was beautiful." He insisted that neither biographer nor any of the Fassbinder 'people' show any shame at flaking for the sinking sensation or the thrashing chicks. It's that sort of sex.

In Fassbinder's time it is a wonder that RWF saved out for us to be told. The product of a broken home, at thirty, the boy Gero found himself living on prostitute sex with Mother and her 17-year-old lover. Then Maria married a writer of short stories. Fassbinder would call on them: "I am in love with a prostitute as intimate as a virgin!" (Adam 2 Pm at 13 RWF had found that he was A Homosexual.) "He had a very, very heavy childhood," his mother later explained.

Fassbinder made his first film, a 10-minute educational assignment, at 20. More importantly, he began "filling his life with followers in order to make movies, thus making movies to fill his life with followers". He needed a family — to substitute for the unsatisfactory one he was born into. The relationships with which he ruled the family is reminiscent of both the recent happy movement and the mischievous Chorus Mancos. Having recruited his neo-hippies RWF was on good position to become the new man at the New German Cinema. In a very few years he would be its chief villain.

The rapid transition from promising type to headless man's thought, you would think, made an interesting study: the reflection between art and power, art and money exposed to chaotic cultural processes. After all, a biography is more than just a reconstruction (Heteromimesis?) for the film. Isn't it? With the

rise and rise of RWF, however, Katz only gives us crumbs. Never does he allow scholarship to stand in the way of good gossip. Respectably, as it undermines the whole concept of film history — anyway, perhaps.

Meanwhile, back with the film, history "was getting complicated and pregnant with the issues of 1968" (Chorus) Andreas Bander and his lot were beginning to make movies into their own hands. One of their first acts was to destroy the Action Theatre whose Fassbinder had been head. Surprisingly, it was neither political nor symbolic but in an act of personal revenge on RWF's new family. Fassbinder himself admired the strength of the Bander group. And to judge from the critical response to his work, Fassbinder could fairly lay claim to being a reviver of the artform. The again Katz is unmoved by wider cultural considerations. He means to give us the dirt.

The identity, incident is the Bander case, between professed and private motive is present in Fassbinder's filmmaking. From that comes his chaotic personal life was increasingly bound up with his art. Not only were lovers cast, sometimes in dominating roles, but the director also appeared in Fassbinderian cinema. (*Die Fort And His Friends* he married. Even his mother got a partner.) All were recruited. And if RWF demanded loyalty he gave none. Dubbed with the title-names of tragic-gamblers (Kurt Raab was Bruno Pinning Fassbinder's films fell in and out of love with their director. Somehow the films were made. So sometimes was the script that before long Fassbinder was making films about making films.

These bits of shooting stars, doomed genius, are a bit like Greek tragedy. The audience knows exactly how it will end. The dramatic interest lies in the biographer's skill in pursuing off the inevitable. RWF's fatal flaw was his addiction to the limited drugs of cocaine and fame. The American cinema broke down because for him it was "the only one that has reached an audience". On a visit to a New York pub he the Fassbinder people were seen at the imperial corner of the New World "That of course," remembers Susan Petersen, "was the famous flack we'd heard about but never seen before, and we were quite taken with it." Fassbinder was playing James Bond with his screen. Excess was excess and any meanings expressed by his cinema were dismissed as the mean call of mediocrity. "Everybody must decide for himself whether it is better to have a head but more intensely felt existence or to live a long and ordinary life."

I will use this for Robert Katz's biography. When David finally pulls the plug on Rainer Werner Fassbinder it's a relief. Despite its patchy research and its huge holes the life is usually moving. Dreadfully fascinating. While it is not in the same class as the biographies of Joe Green and John Fante there is common to them all the sense of being being pursued. There is also not a little space as we participate in a game of Risk the Corpses. In Fassbinder's case this ritual fascination is performed for us by Karin Min. "A tall, slender woman, her beauty worn but not diminished by middle age" (1) She makes a death mask. "The body was rolled in a car, and had put on a marble slab. I was left alone. . . They'd removed his brain. . . I couldn't get used to his being dead. . . Every now and then, workers came into the room, grave diggers. They were talking about him. One of them said, 'No more organs for Mr Fassbinder, right?'" Thus is completed the revenge of the living.

Simon Hughes



LOVE IS COLDER THAN DEATH: Fassbinder directs

## BOOKS RECEIVED

**WALT DISNEY'S FANTASIA** John Culhane (Australasian Publishing Company, 1987, \$16, ISBN 0 8687 8078 9)  
 • A comprehensive, enthusiastic celebration of the creation of the Disney movie, illustrated with character sketches, storyboards, paintings and animation frames

**THE GOLDEN AGE OF FRENCH CINEMA 1929-1938** John W. Martin (Columbus/Australasian Publishing Company, 1987, \$19.95, ISBN 0 86287 312 9), **LUCIANO VINCENTI** Charles Torenii (Columbus/Australasian Publishing Company, 1987, \$19.95, ISBN 0 86287 332 9), **FEDERICO FELLINI: VARIETY LIGHTS TO LA COLLE VITA** Frank Barba (Columbus/Australasian Publishing Company, 1987, \$19.95, ISBN 0 86287 356 9), **ROMAN POLANSKI** Virginia Wright Wootton (Columbus/Australasian Publishing Company, 1987, \$19.95, ISBN 0 86287 333 0)

• Four more titles in the Columbus/Palmsprint series, reference works on major directors and filmmaking trends designed to appeal to both general readers and film students.

**THE FILMS OF STEVEN SPIELBERG** Neil Shepard (Golden Press/Woodfin, 1987, \$19.95, ISBN 0 690 53226 9)  
 • A look at Spielberg's film career, from his films short about a disastrously robbery (made in the age of 13) to *The Color Purple*. Illustrated with more than 125 colour pictures.

**LAUREL AND HARDY: CLOWN PRINCES OF COMEDY** Bruce Crowther (Columbus, \$19.95, ISBN 0 86287 344 4)  
 • Over-priced illustrated paperback account of the film career of Stan and Ollie. With filmography.

**GEORGE GERSHWIN** Alan Kendall (Harrow/Australasian Publishing Company, \$19.95, ISBN 0 86137 30)  
 • The biography of David Gurnick explores the work, life and times of America's favourite popular composer.

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Ima La Douce	(Peters)	\$18.99

## READINGS — SOUTH YARRA

153 Tonk Road — 387 1885 (Books, LPs, CDs, Cass.)  
 478/79 Deep Avenue — 386 5877 (Secondhand LPs & Cass.)  
 388/389 P.O. Box 424, South Yarra Vic. 3141.

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Robert Katz with Peter Berling

# LOVE IS COLDER THAN DEATH

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# CHIP THRILLS

For anyone who's wondered about DAT, PCM, kHz and SPL, FRED HARDEN demystifies digital sound.



HOW IT'S DONE: Steve Gorn explains

**WHILE WE** still have the same pair of analog ears, subject to the variables of age and health, we have now moved into the era of digital audio.

If you have done any sound work for TV recently, you will have encountered the term PCM. Having used PCM tracks for re-amping audio tracks for commercials, I knew that PCM (Pulse Code Modulation) is the most common method of digitally recording sound. Examining the PCM process allows us to cover most of the current and future uses of digital audio recording and reproduction.

## EXISTING TECHNIQUE VS. THE FUTURE

We are comfortable with the analog approach to film sound which involves the chain of a microphone, preamplifier, tape recorder, mag film transfer, multitrack (film or tape) mix, optical print. Processes such as Dolby encoding have dramatically increased the quality at each step of the

process, but there are still restrictions on the dynamic range, distortions, signal loss, and noise inherent in analog sound.

A digital alternative to the film sound sequence would be limited by the fact that conventional film processors require analog methods for much of the chain of events. From microphone to preamplifier is always an analog signal, although a number of people are using PCM for backup; digital location recording is cumbersome, at least until we see the first of the Digital Audio Tape (DAT) format machines.

Time-coded film systems that speed up syncing of rushes are available, but most editors fall back on transferring the location sound to magnetic film. There is no way that the traditional methods would be encoded digitally at these stages. We will have to wait for some of the new editing systems such as Lucasfilm's Goldlock, where the sync rushes are

transferred to video disc and then played back on multiple laser disc players controlled by a computer.

Until then, digital will be used only at the multitrack mix where the mixer is digital. This would be used to make the optical sound neg or produce the magnetic stripe tracks.

## WOOD AUDIO GOES DIGITAL

The biggest and most immediate changes offered by digital sound will be for TV soundtracks and video or film audio for TV, where the image and sound are cut on video and the digital audio tapes can be synchronized and laid up on the multitrack for the mix. Then the stereo digital master would be transferred to the new digital VTRs (Video Tape Recorders) so the final release dub could be digital sound.

## THE RECORDING PROCESS

The conventional analog

process records the original audio signal as variations in the magnetization of recording tape. This comes with the attendant problems of replaying the recording accurately and, with aging, degradation and irregularities of the original signal. Wow and flutter, distortion, signal loss, noise from the tape and the processing equipment all come with the process.

Digital tape recording still involves the same problems in processing the signal, but it breaks the continuous waveform into discrete pulses.

All audio waveforms have two main features: the amplitude of the wave (its height and depth) and time (how many waves go past a point in a certain period).

The digital system operates by separating time into very short segments, dictated by a crystal-controlled clock. The actual number of segments is called the sampling rate. With each segment, the waveform voltage is sampled at that moment by an analog to digital converter and a digital

number is generated that shows what the actual voltage was at that moment. This turns the continuous waveform into a series of steps approximating the original waveform, as can be seen in the diagram below.

More samples will make the digital signal match the analog signal more accurately, but after a certain point this becomes much more difficult and expensive, and the quality increase is difficult to detect. The digital audio system that most of us are familiar with is Compact Disc. The sampling rate for CDs is 44,100 Hz. Audio purists say that the best conventional analog systems can achieve the same high frequency response as CDs but the fact that digital information is recorded as either 0 or 1 bits of information means there is no room for the 'maybe or almost' signals that are heard as background noise.

To recreate even the simplest of audio signals requires a massive amount of data about it, and while computers are used to handling and storing this information onto floppy or hard discs, the replay time needed is much slower than for computer text etc. Digital recording on a standard tape recorder requires an increase in the speed of the tape past the heads: a change in the tape heads and the tape size if.

A simpler method uses the wide bandwidth available with the rotary heads of video tape recording systems to record the digital audio signal in place of the picture signal information. This means that almost any Video Cassette, VHS or Beta half-inch, or U-matic video cassette recorder can be used as a digital tape deck. All that is required is a PCM converter that feeds a (series if required) digitized signal to the VCR. The same device decodes the signal for transfer to the master tracks later.

## LIMITATIONS

Stationary head recorders offer several advantages over rotary heads. Because cassettes are used for rotary designs this means that electronic editing is necessary: it is difficult to 'drop in', and because the stereo tracks are multiplexed (mixed) into a single recorded video track it is difficult to work on just one left or right signal.

Stationary heads also make it easier to record and playback for synchronous tracks, important for professional multitrack recording. This same argument has been echoed by the current development of the soon-to-be-released DAT recorder for the domestic market, where S-DAT and R-DAT (stationary and rotary) systems have been developed.

The biggest advantage of PCM recording on video equipment is cost. It is possible to have the highest quality production audio for well under \$2500 if half-inch equipment is used. Existing video synchronizing equipment used in edit suites can control audio editing as well. One of the best examples I've seen of PCM used in this fashion is at Frame Set & Match, a Sydney off-line edit facility.

## FRAME SET & MATCH

Steve Dunn and Richard Schreiber, both ex-Videolink editors, have set up a small editing facility that I believe is ideal in size and cost-effective. They have an Australian ABC editor controlling sending three Sony U-Matics, a Sony Betacam, and a small mixer. While a lot of their work is corporate low

band work, they have the ability and enthusiasm to push the capabilities of the system. I asked Steve what prompted the PCM purchase and how it was used.

"The reason that we jumped onto it was because to reach this such noisy sound. And suddenly for \$2500 you can have such uncompromising audio quality it seems made for the lower quality formats — you can record it on Betacam and one-inch but you can't true-base correct it for replay. Our major use of PCM is generated from the Betacam. Of the video production for TV today, 10 per cent is on one-inch and 90 per cent on Betacam. After the initial leaving stages with Betacam audio tracks, a lot of production is now being done using the Dolby audio tracks of the Betacam. They still use a sound recorder working conventionally with a Reagen etc, and processing the audio through the Reagen, while making a safety copy on quarter-inch.

"If the quarter-inch tapes need to be used, the best method we've come across is recording a burst of the time code from the Betacam at the beginning of the scene onto the quarter-inch. When you come back to the edit suite, we can dub a PCM U-matic from it by feeding the video

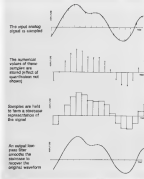
signal at the same time into the time-code reader. The reader doesn't react to the audio until it hits the section of time-code, starts counting and, when it cuts out, continues to supply code from that point. It is then an easy matter to sync with the edit computer to the Betacam master.

"Sports Greys from Kennedy Miller is a good example of PCM use. They are doing eight one-hour programs, it's a massive shoot — about 1000 Betacam tapes. At 20 minutes each, that's a lot of material.

"They do a rough punch and crutch assembly of the material, and then bring it here to polish up. So we end up with an edit master list and all the numbers on floppy disc ready for the CMS. That's not particularly original but at that point there is no other way to do on the sound. The system is then automatic when you come to sync up the sound. All the numbers are there when you are ready to lay tracks up to the multitrack for the mix.

"The process goes like this. The Dolby tracks are decoded to one of more PCM-U-matics. When they walked into the on-line, which they have just finished, they don't have to think about the audio. In a \$5000-an-hour edit suite you shouldn't be thinking about audio. We fed up the whole scene on PCM. We fed the edit list and, because all the time codes are the same, we could edit up the different tracks. We would look at the list and if there were changes we would pull that edit out, make it 50 frames longer either and which takes a few seconds on the computer and watch it seamless onto the cassette. Because you can't get at the stereo tracks once they are on PCM, you can flip it on alternative tracks to make things easier on the sound editor (left/right, left/right — it's a matter of choice). Then if you suddenly get overlapping audio you put it on another cassette with the same code. It was all properly sound checked, and they were sort of getting four tracks. We laid up the 100 per cent sound, additional 'mixes' and it was all so easy.

"On film it's different. We have worked where the rushes are all telecine-transferred to cassette. Before we even start editing we select the takes onto a selected master roll. A list of these are then sent to the neg >



THE NYQUIST-SHANNON THEOREM: A band limited signal can be sampled and reconstructed without loss.



FRAME SET &amp; MATCH: The setup

cubers who assemble the whole takes in the same order as we have. But when they start doing their audio, they seem to make it really difficult for themselves. I've seen them trying to oversynch the mag transfer to sync using the cassette image. It's so much easier with video when the numbers are all there.

"Half-inch VCRs seem to have some problems with PCM. Big dropouts are worse on the smaller tape and I do

know that a few people who had been using half-inch PCM to back up on instead of on Magna (using the original F1 portable PCM unit that unfortunately Sony took off the market). They've stopped using the VHS machines and have gone back to Magna. Gemini Sound was also backing up their masters on PCM VHS and have gone over to 1/2-inch so it seems to have some problems; it may have just been only bad stock.

I don't know. On the other hand we've seen some people using the Video 8 for their backups, not the PCM Video 8 model but recording PCM on the Video 8's blank tracks.

"What has happened on Sports Center really is a revolution in video audio, and it can't help but become the best way to work. And we are trying to convince clients that it's just as good for cost reasons. It's faster and it saves money.

## THE BEGINNERS GUIDE TO

### SOUND

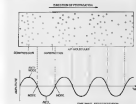
Sound starts with a vibration of an object. A string is plucked, hands clapped etc., which creates the air next to it, compressing the normally uniformly distributed air molecules into pulsating waves of denser areas of air pressure followed by lesser than normal areas. One sequence of compression and rarefaction is called a **cycle** and the number of these recurring cycles that pass a fixed point in a second is called the **frequency** of that sound. The measurement of this frequency is in **Hertz (Hz)** as cycles per second.

The amplitude of that sound is the amount of pressure displacement above and below the level of the normal air (this is shown as a peak in the height of the wave and depth of the trough above the horizontal axis).

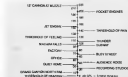
### HEARING

The range of human hearing is usually over as 20Hz to 20,000Hz (or 20 **kilohertz**, written kHz). To give you some idea of the size of that range, consider that a 20Hz signal has a wavelength more than 50 feet long and for 20kHz it is less than half an inch. It is easy to imagine that line of the pressure that change the sound pressure into electrical signals (such as microphones) can handle the range without affecting some areas of the audible range. This is where the term **flat response** refers to the device's ability to leave the range of sound unchanged. Flat recording instruments have a flat response over the full range. (An ear can't hear a flat response, the greatest sensitivity is in the 3 to 4 kHz range.)

Sound pressure depends on the particle displacement in the air and this is very small. In a normal conversation the particle displacement is only about one-millionth of an inch. A football crowd roar would still only be about one-thousandth of an inch. The pressure of the atmosphere is measured in micro-



CATCH A WAVE: Wave propagation



SOUND-PRESSURE LEVELS: From the sounds of silence to the noise that annoys

bars. The threshold of hearing for most people is 0.0002 microbar. A microbar is equal to one-millionth of normal atmospheric pressure as you can see how sensitive to the minute changes of pressure the ear is. If it were any more sensitive you could hear the motion of air molecules produced by heat (giving a match would produce not only the sound of the match as the box and the burst of the

flame and crackle of burning wood, but the sound of the heated air around it).

Because the ear operates over an energy range of 1,000,000,000,000 to 1 it was necessary to find a way to make of these figures workable in calculations and formulas. A logarithmic scale with a base of 10 has been adopted. The above range would then be written  $10^0$  to

### MEASURING SOUND

The unit of measurement of sound energy or the Sound Pressure Level (SPL) is called the **decibel (dB)**. Taking the lowest level we can as practice 0dB, we go through the range daily up to the level of fading or discomfort at about 120dB (a jet engine hits about 150dB). To compare the noise increases in Sound Pressure Level we set our ears to a 100dB level. Two jet engines, say 1,300dB — the increase is only 3dB that's a total of 3.1 increase, remember that it is a logarithmic increase. There are a lot more weights attached to the actual measured pressure difference from the second engine.

That's not really confusing when you consider a typical example of a domestic hi-fi. The formula for calculating dB is  $dB = 10 \log P_2$  divided by  $P_1$ , where  $P_1$  and  $P_2$  are values of acoustic or electric power, such as watts. If you are trying to choose between two amplifiers, one with 40 watts output and the other with 60 watts, your ears will hardly be able to tell the difference. By using the above formula (if you've got the hat), you will see that the difference =  $10 \log (60/40) = 10 \log 1.5 = 10 \times 0.176 = 1.76$  dB. Because the minimum level change that your ears can perceive is 1dB, the increase you hear from the more powerful amplifier will be only slight.

### OTHER FACTORS

Many factors influence how sound is heard initially and when it is restricted. **Attenuation** of the sound takes place even as it travels through the air (the sharp high frequencies of a nearby thunderbolt is attenuated to a low rumble as the sound comes from further away. Different temperatures affect the way the sound is refracted. It bends around objects, diffuses when it passes through small openings, and sound energy is reflected or absorbed by other and surfaces it hits.





David Lange

## NEW ZEALAND BY MIKE NICOLAIDI TO THE RESCUE

the experience of the 10-week shoot of the offshore Walt Disney Touchstone Film production, *The Anzacs*, may clarify what has been a dismal grey area in local industry attitudes.

It also might signal a more collaborative approach between segments of the industry in the decade ahead.

As in Australia and elsewhere, the issue of offshore production is all so generic has been a source of tension in the indigenous feature industry. It raises gray the issue of cultural appropriation and the exploitation of local resources and talent. It can divert local private investment away from the home product.

In New Zealand, where economic concerns are likely to keep local features in check for a post, the debate was flare with violence. This happened in 1984 when New Zealand Actor's Equity picked and generally harassed a co-production, mounted by New Zealand and overseas interests but with scarcely a Kiwi on the cast list. Public skirmishes also surfaced on a number of other "imports" as those few years of boom production when film festering, through the use of limited resource loans, was lucrative business for deal makers and money merchants.

The government finally stepped down as that film overran costs from 1 October 1984. The subsequent authorized Internal Revenue Department investigation of special film partnerships operating in the 1980-84 period, and the resultant praise in all future filmmaking in the country in

1985 and 1986, has helped stifle rhetoric and reduce some tension.

Many actors and most film technicians began to think that another groundbreaking was all very well, but the priority was work and some continuity of employment.

In a backhanded way a more positive atmosphere also was engendered by the David Lange Labour government. Employing more than 100,000, it encouraged less crime and greater savings and cohesiveness by taking advantage of diversity between industry segments and not according to any one method of industry manipulation through the tax system.

The *Anzacs* was a watershed in local industry attitudes, even 1985, as shown by what took place during the months of pre-production and the shoot which concluded in Auckland in late June.

The difference between the Disney project and previous overseas productions was that it was the first fully offshore-funded film.

It had a big budget of \$15.4 million. The story dealt with a group of Australian immigrants who rescued their allied fathers from a North Korean prison fortress.

Disney wanted to bring in at least 15 performers, hire 800-900 aircraft for aerial action sequences, and convert Wellington's air base near Auckland into a US base in Korea.

The government was amenable. The Independent Producers and Directors Guild (IPDG), particularly in the person of its president, John (Pete) Pless Barnett, was strongly in favor of the project. There was work in the film, as much well above those for local features for members of the New Zealand Film and Video Technicians Guild (NZFVTC).

David Gascoigne, chairman of the NZ Film Commission, said he would not like to see imported productions work to the detriment of the local industry. However, as long as there was surplus capacity in the country and New Zealand money was not involved, he saw no reason against it.

Disney has subsequently claimed the Queensland location shoot as "the biggest economic news to hit (New Zealand's) South Island in recent history." Fifty local technicians were employed to build sets and 150 obtained roles as extras. In addition escorted around wreathers, local workers and most people were hired. For the three-week Auckland shoot another 300 extras were employed.

The only section of the local industry unhappy about Disney's arrival was Actor's Equity, where internal debate was mounting over its policy that there be no more than two overseas actors for any film made in New Zealand. The membership also was bound by the policy of the Federation of International Actors that offshore films must pay local actors what they would pay in their own at home.

In the words of Jocelyn Gibson, Equity national secretary, the extended and difficult negotiations with Disney finally provided the catalyst for policy change.

For the few New Zealanders with speaking roles in *The Anzacs*, rates were settled at a margin above those for most local films but below US Screen Actors' Guild rates translated into New Zealand dollars. (The minimum rate is struck in a contract to have been \$24,000 a day and \$24,000 a week.)

The deal also involved Equity relinquishing its requirement on the number of overseas actors for any wholly-funded offshore production coming in, and Disney's agreement to pay a levy of 9% of gross actors' budget — estimated between \$24,000,000 and \$94,000. Originally Equity sought a percentage of the gross budget, but without the support of technicians, it accepted the Disney actors' budget-only criterion offer.

It is this crumb from Hollywood major that could become the preserve and rallying point for all segments of the industry in the future.

Although the IPDG has seemed antagonistic to any form of levy on offshore production, this would not necessarily be the case if offshore

productions began competing on a regular basis for local personnel and assets.

As the George Lucas-Ron Howard fantasy film *Willow* checked into Queensland following the Disney departure, the local industry that most Kiwi crew and actors always would give priority to work on a local film (presumably at lower "local" rates) became a little strained.

While the NZ Film Commission, obviously poised between the government and the industry, officially sits on the fence, there are sharrings within.

The personal view of executive director Ben Smith is that offshore productions come to New Zealand because of low crew rates and the great natural locations.

It is logical they should pay some form of fee. Many countries in fact do charge a location levy, he says.

Mike Westgate, chairman of the NZFVTC, believes a location levy used to promote training of local technicians and actors could be advantageous and should be fully debated within the industry.

Meanwhile, Equity's Gibson has not been establishing a charitable front to handle the fine Disney money. She says it will be up to the Equity membership, about 800, to decide what is done with it — perhaps, film production training for actors, or acting training generally.

Whether *Willow* follows Disney's lead appeared problematic at the time of writing Gibson, who only recently succeeded Susan Ord as the key Equity post, says. "The problem with *Willow* is that usual negotiation went badly and there has been virtually no communication."

Very few, if any, New Zealand actors will be employed. Murray Newey, NZ production manager, speaks of "about \$2,000,000" to be pumped into the Queensland region and 10 Kiwis already employed in new and associated jobs.

Deep industry consideration of a levy may therefore be postponed until after *Willow* wraps and before the next arrival.

Meanwhile, Vincent Ward's *The Navigator*, postponed from last year and the first co-production between the New Zealand and Australian film commissions, began a nine-week shoot on 20 July. It has a mix of Kiwi/Australian crew with featured actors from both countries and Canada, a blend of indigenous and offshore that could become contagious.



Anthony Buckley

## THE MINISERIES: the big budget on the small screen

"I DON'T think there's any future in the miniseries," says veteran producer Anthony Buckley. "I'm not convinced the way networks program our drama suits the viewer at all."

Buckley has just completed his second miniseries, *Poor Man's Orange*, and he says he's not planning any more. He finds the format is too restrictive, too expensive and unlike for the audience.

"I feel that miniseries aren't live on the director either," says Buckley. "Because all you have to shoot seven minutes a day. The viewer is expecting feature film quality and you don't really give them that because of the expense."

Buckley may be less than enthusiastic about the format but he and director George Whaley are delighted with the result. *Poor Man's Orange* is the sequel to their adaptation of Ruth Park's bestselling novel *The Harp in the South*, and it continues the story of three-city, post-war Sydney and the battling Durrys of 12th Plymouth St, a poor working-class family of tough Irish stock living among the tenement houses, slums, shops, brothels and dy-dog shops of Surry Hills in the late 1940s.

It is a story of struggle and heartbreak, and there's a slightly melodramatic tone beginning to creep in — then that suit inevitably. This series, like its predecessor, is pure melodrama. That's not to undermine Whaley's

achievement. The performers develop Park's earthy Aussie archetypes into flesh and blood characters, when they could have easily become caricatures. *Pioneers*, authentic and expressive as Buckley's production is, there's none of the bloated pretentiousness of other historical miniseries. Its sets are modest but we still get a fair sense of a period, even though the series makers do attempt to deal directly with major historical events. Yet in spite of the constraints of the family saga narrative, Whaley was able to integrate broader themes into the regional drama, even so the task proved frustrating.

"I am personally interested in the social and political environment and the effect those things have on people," says Whaley. "Of course we did use amounts of research on *Harp* and *Poor Man's*. We make plenty reference to the political events of the time — like strikes and mass unemployment, and we deal with the issue of housing commission blocks in *Poor Man's*. But to treat them properly — and I tried — you'd have to write another story. It just didn't fit. We were doing the books and while our values change, the essence has got to be there and the major events have got to be there. I think *Harp* and *Poor Man's* will indicate to a lot of people that perhaps things haven't changed much for a lot of people."

Whaley had never directed film or television before Buckley offered

him the miniseries project. He is best known for his work in the theatre as an actor, director, producer, teacher and writer, but Buckley he adapted *Harp* and wrote the script with Heloise Woomer as well as adapting and directing *Poor Man's Orange*. His stage production of *Meie Budd's On Our Selection* set box office records and now Buckley wants to make a new feature film version (not a remake of Raymond Longham's 1955 classic or Ken Hill's 1982 police version) with Whaley writing and directing. Whaley is pursuing something fresh and new. He knows the Victorian melodrama of his stage adaptations would be low-office person. The new film will incorporate music, comedy, caprice and romance. Col Storch Budd will work with a modern audience.

"I think it can," says Buckley. "I want to see *Orange's* production in the *Miniseries* very vigorously. I thought... Good Lord here will this work in 1988? Well, I was wrong. It was a mixed audience of young people and old, and they loved it. It played in packed houses. It's extraordinary, that interest in Australians and authors like Mark Radd and Henry Lawson (that there's a great connection out there and I think the big networks are the best)."

Buckley believes that the miniseries are spending too much money on expensive product in an effort to secure ratings. They seem to think that viewers do not want to see themselves, despite the success of local miniseries and dramas like *Neighbours*, *A Country Practice*, *Anthony's Boys* and *The Ring in the South*.

He also believes that networks should take a long hard look at

their programming, pointing out the advantages of the British system, where commercials are screened every 25 minutes.

"You know they're on for five or seven minutes and it gives drama a chance," he says. "It's something that should be looked at in Australia." He finds that an hour screened weekly, as was the case with the jewel in the crown and *Pioneer* *Proposed*, a satisfying for viewers.

Buckley, who produced *Castle*, *The Bushmen*, *The Billings*, *On Angel Street* and *Woe*, has three major projects, plus a documentary series, in preparation. These include an adaptation of Roden Dendron's *Tacks*, with the director of *Bliss*, Ray Lawrence.

He is convinced that there is still an audience for local product. He begins his in the possibility of deregulation in the TV industry. "Deregulation is when you're talking about commercials being imported and the reduction of local content — that has to be fought tooth and nail. The networks will self-regulate and if they are allowed to do this under the present ownership conditions, it will spell the end for the Australian TV industry."

"I must be stunned down the government's threat that we would not be sitting back talking to you now if it weren't for the 1986 regulation when television was first introduced — that commercial had to be made in Australia. Out of that came an Australian film industry. Look at the people who have come out of commercials. Ray Lawrence, Peter Weir, Fred Schepers, Bruce Beresford, Paul Mousley. If we're going to deregulate, we're taking a national treasure."



Poor Man's Orange





A full listing of the features, telemovies, documentaries and shorts now in pre-production, production or post-production in Australia.

Parent company	Big International
Founder	James Morgan Brown
Director	Gary Morgan
Chairman	Gary Morgan
Managing director	Jim Morgan
Senior partner	Henry Hall
Publicity	Leslie Mitchell

*Spokane is a relatively affluent unit in power. It has a good reputation in Spokane. However, the Spokane business is somewhat disappointing in terms of growth and development.*

Food category	Indicators of use
Meat category	Meat identification
	Meat source
Produce	Plant varieties
Alcohol	Plant varieties
Oil category	Plant varieties
Food for special diets	Plant varieties
Tea	Plant varieties
Plant variety	Plant varieties
Food source	Plant varieties
Food	Plant varieties
Food category	Plant varieties
Food source	Plant varieties

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

Chief, Security	John F. Parnell
Chief, Training	John F. Parnell
Chief, Logistics	John F. Parnell
Chief, Finance	John F. Parnell
Chief, Operations	John F. Parnell
Chief, Administration	John F. Parnell
Chief, Information Systems	John F. Parnell
Chief, Legal Affairs	John F. Parnell
Chief, Public Affairs	John F. Parnell
Chief, Personnel	John F. Parnell
Chief, Facilities	John F. Parnell
Chief, Maintenance	John F. Parnell
Chief, Security	John F. Parnell
Chief, Training	John F. Parnell
Chief, Logistics	John F. Parnell
Chief, Finance	John F. Parnell
Chief, Operations	John F. Parnell
Chief, Administration	John F. Parnell
Chief, Information Systems	John F. Parnell
Chief, Legal Affairs	John F. Parnell
Chief, Public Affairs	John F. Parnell
Chief, Personnel	John F. Parnell
Chief, Facilities	John F. Parnell
Chief, Maintenance	John F. Parnell

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

1. <b>What is the purpose of the study?</b>	1. <b>What is the purpose of the study?</b>
2. <b>What are the research objectives?</b>	2. <b>What are the research objectives?</b>
3. <b>What is the research design?</b>	3. <b>What is the research design?</b>
4. <b>What are the variables?</b>	4. <b>What are the variables?</b>
5. <b>What is the sample size?</b>	5. <b>What is the sample size?</b>
6. <b>What are the data sources?</b>	6. <b>What are the data sources?</b>
7. <b>What are the data collection methods?</b>	7. <b>What are the data collection methods?</b>
8. <b>What are the data analysis methods?</b>	8. <b>What are the data analysis methods?</b>
9. <b>What are the results?</b>	9. <b>What are the results?</b>
10. <b>What are the conclusions?</b>	10. <b>What are the conclusions?</b>

[illegible]

**(Working table)**

Chief company	Company 1, Ltd
Chairman	Andrew Potts
Director	Henry J. Parsons
Director (UK)	Wing Cochrane
Company secretary	James Adams
Chief Engineer	William Potts
Chief Designer	James Adams
Chief Draftsman	Geoffrey Parsons
Chief Designer	Jack Parsons
Technical Assistant	John Parsons
Engineer	W. Parsons
Director	James
Director of design	James
The company is the usual 100% owned, but the directors and the members of the board are not	

[illegible]

**TO ADVISE  
CINEMA**

Patricia Amadi: N

[illegible]

**Patricia Amodi Melbourne 429 5511**



[illegible]

<p> <b>THE SIBLING OF THE PARTNER</b>  <b>First symptoms</b> → High blood pressure  <b>Prognosis</b> → Poor  <b>Prevention</b> → None  <b>Management</b> → None  <b>Relationships</b> → Change of sex  <b>Other</b> → None  <b>Hereditary</b> → Yes  <b>Sexual activity</b> → None  <b>Sexual satisfaction</b> → None  <b>Sexual problems</b> → None  <b>Common problems</b> → None  <b>Adaptation</b> → None  <b>Self-knowledge</b> → None </p>	<p> <b>High blood pressure</b>  <b>First symptoms</b> → None  <b>Prognosis</b> → None  <b>Prevention</b> → None  <b>Management</b> → None  <b>Relationships</b> → None  <b>Other</b> → None  <b>Hereditary</b> → None  <b>Sexual activity</b> → None  <b>Sexual satisfaction</b> → None  <b>Sexual problems</b> → None  <b>Common problems</b> → None  <b>Adaptation</b> → None  <b>Self-knowledge</b> → None </p>
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spelling	year	where
Carl	1949	St. Louis
Marion	1950	St. Louis
Marion	1951	St. Louis
Marion	1952	St. Louis
Marion	1953	St. Louis
Marion	1954	St. Louis
Marion	1955	St. Louis
Marion	1956	St. Louis
Marion	1957	St. Louis
Marion	1958	St. Louis
Marion	1959	St. Louis
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Marion	2008	St. Louis
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Marion	2010	St. Louis
Marion	2011	St. Louis
Marion	2012	St. Louis
Marion	2013	St. Louis
Marion	2014	St. Louis
Marion	2015	St. Louis
Marion	2016	St. Louis
Marion	2017	St. Louis
Marion	2018	St. Louis
Marion	2019	St. Louis
Marion	2020	St. Louis
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Marion	2028	St. Louis
Marion	2029	St. Louis
Marion	2030	St. Louis
Marion	2031	St. Louis
Marion	2032	St. Louis
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Marion	2036	St. Louis
Marion	2037	St. Louis
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Marion	2041	St. Louis
Marion	2042	St. Louis
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Marion	2046	St. Louis
Marion	2047	St. Louis
Marion	2048	St. Louis
Marion	2049	St. Louis
Marion	2050	St. Louis
Marion	2051	St. Louis
Marion	2052	St. Louis
Marion	2053	St. Louis
Marion	2054	St. Louis
Marion	2055	St. Louis
Marion	2056	St. Louis
Marion	2057	St. Louis
Marion	2058	St. Louis
Marion	2059	St. Louis
Marion	2060	St. Louis
Marion	2061	St. Louis
Marion	2062	St. Louis
Marion	2063	St. Louis
Marion	2064	St. Louis
Marion	2065	St. Louis
Marion	2066	St. Louis
Marion	2067	St. Louis
Mar		



### ALUMINUM DOLLY TRACK







There is a high probability of a range of young people on their way to the first day. Visitors are advised to plan accordingly as each year there are a large number of visitors.

# A BUSINESS PLAN

First company: The Australia  
Second company: The Australia  
Third company: The Australia  
Fourth company: The Australia  
Fifth company: The Australia  
Sixth company: The Australia  
Seventh company: The Australia  
Eighth company: The Australia  
Ninth company: The Australia  
Tenth company: The Australia  
Eleventh company: The Australia  
Twelfth company: The Australia  
Thirteenth company: The Australia  
Fourteenth company: The Australia  
Fifteenth company: The Australia  
Sixteenth company: The Australia  
Seventeenth company: The Australia  
Eighteenth company: The Australia  
Nineteenth company: The Australia  
Twentieth company: The Australia

# CARE TALKS

First company: The Australia  
Second company: The Australia  
Third company: The Australia  
Fourth company: The Australia  
Fifth company: The Australia  
Sixth company: The Australia  
Seventh company: The Australia  
Eighth company: The Australia  
Ninth company: The Australia  
Tenth company: The Australia  
Eleventh company: The Australia  
Twelfth company: The Australia  
Thirteenth company: The Australia  
Fourteenth company: The Australia  
Fifteenth company: The Australia  
Sixteenth company: The Australia  
Seventeenth company: The Australia  
Eighteenth company: The Australia  
Nineteenth company: The Australia  
Twentieth company: The Australia

# INTERNATIONAL AT KEMERLEY (PART 1 & PART 2)

First company: The Australia  
Second company: The Australia  
Third company: The Australia  
Fourth company: The Australia  
Fifth company: The Australia  
Sixth company: The Australia  
Seventh company: The Australia  
Eighth company: The Australia  
Ninth company: The Australia  
Tenth company: The Australia  
Eleventh company: The Australia  
Twelfth company: The Australia  
Thirteenth company: The Australia  
Fourteenth company: The Australia  
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# EUROPEAN TRAVEL MARKETING

First company: The Australia  
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# FAMILY COURT

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# THE AUSTRALIAN AUSTRALIAN

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# FOR PARENTS

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# FREE AND ENTERTAINMENT

First company: The Australia  
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